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Spare Times: For Children

By THE NEW YORK TIMES

FOR CHILDREN

KEEPING UP WITH KEEPERS WEEKEND It's hard enough to teach little humans to sit still, follow directions and calmly accept vaccinations; how difficult is it when those who are learning are even wilder types, like Stella, Beebe and Alexis? They're sea lions at the Prospect Park Zoo in Brooklyn, and with fellow residents — meerkats, cotton-top tamarins and alpacas — they're among the stars of Keeping Up With Keepers Weekend. The other stars, of course, are zookeepers. "It's everything you've always wanted to know about being a zookeeper but were afraid to ask," said Patricia Cole, the zoo's assistant director and curator of animals. Tomorrow and Sunday the staff members will demonstrate training techniques and present their furry charges with enrichment: treats that stimulate intelligence by requiring ingenuity. At 11 a.m. the meerkats will go after grubs concealed in paper bags. (Yum.) At 2:30 p.m. the tamarins, a type of monkey, will receive cricket rocks, stones drilled with holes and filled with insects. "They're like time-release cricket cookies," Ms. Cole said. The training, while fun to watch, is not solely entertainment. The object of teaching "targeting" (following a stick with a rubber ball at the end) and "stationing" (remaining on a colored tile), is to make the animals easier to transport and examine. The meerkats are trained to go into crates, while the tamarins learn to step onto scales. At 3 p.m. visitors will see how alpacas (the zoo's are Pukara, left, and Loki) get used to halters. And at 11:45 a.m. and 2 and 4 p.m., the sea lions go through their paces. "Every sea lion gets its mouth and eyes looked at daily," Ms. Cole said, "and we'll ask them to show us their flippers." Teaching them to take shots is dicier. "You go through many days of poking them with your finger," she explained. Children at the event can also go on scavenger hunts, see puppet shows, make crafts and even feed and pet Pukara and Loki. "They're very cute," Ms. Cole said. "Except when they spit." (Tomorrow and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., 450 Flatbush Avenue, Prospect Park, Brooklyn, 718-399-7339, prospectparkzoo.com. Free with admission: \$6; \$2.25 for 65+; \$2 for 3 to 12; free for under 3.) LAUREL GRAEBER

'THE ADVENTURES OF MOTTEL, THE CANTOR'S SON' (Sunday) He may not be as well known as Tevye of "Fiddler on the Roof," but young Mottel is a creation of the same author, Sholom Aleichem. The story of his coming to America with his family is at the heart of this musical, being given its world premiere by the Poppy Seed Players. At 11 a.m., Merkin Concert Hall, 129 West 67th Street, Manhattan, (212) 501-3330, merkinconcerthall.org; \$18.

'AN AMERICAN JOURNEY' (Sunday) This is the voyage whose first stop was Ellis Island. The touring ensemble Revels Circle of Song will portray it in a musical history featuring Irish, Italian and Eastern European Jewish characters immigrating in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At 3 p.m., Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Avenue at 103rd Street, (212) 534-1672, mcny.org. Free with suggested admission: \$9; \$5 for students and 62+; free for under 12; \$20 for families.

'ANNE OF GREEN GABLES' (Tonight through Sunday, and Tuesday through Thursday) Another

irrepressible redheaded orphan takes to the stage singing, but this one is Anne, not Annie. Presented by Theatreworks/USA, this musical adaptation of Lucy Maud Montgomery's 1908 novel about an intrepid young Canadian sent to live with a spinster and her brother begins previews tonight and opens on Thursday. (Through May 5.) Tonight at 7, tomorrow at 2 and 7 p.m., Sunday at 1 and 4 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday at 7 p.m., Lucille Lortel Theater, 121 Christopher Street, West Village, (212) 279-4200; \$25.

CROSS-GENERATION CHESS (Sunday) The chessboard is common ground in this monthly program that brings together children from kindergarten through high school with elderly adults. Interested chess players — of any level — meet for games, live classical music, light refreshments and, most important, conversation. From 1 to 5 p.m., Sirovich Senior Center of the Educational Alliance, 331 East 12th Street, East Village; free. Registration: (917) 822-3141 or crossgeneration@aol.com

'THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF UNCLE WIGGILY: WINDBLOWN VISITORS' (Tonight through Sunday) In this new musical, Uncle Wiggily, the elderly rabbit who helped young animals in the stories by Howard R. Garis, is protector of a child: Merilee, who ends up in New York after her home is devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Tonight at 8, tomorrow and Sunday at 3 p.m., Theater for the New City, 155 First Avenue, at Ninth Street, East Village, (212) 254-1109; \$12; \$5 for 12 and under.

'THE GAME BOY' (Tomorrow and Sunday) This new musical from Vital Children's Theater is about a boy, Chase, who is so wrapped up in his favorite video games that he starts to neglect the real world outside the screen. Sound familiar? (Through April 22.) At 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., the McGinn/Cazale Theater, 2162 Broadway, at 76th Street, fourth floor, (212) 352-3101; \$18.

'THE GAZILLION BUBBLE SHOW' (Tonight through Sunday) Children love bubbles, and Fan Yang, in his interactive show, promises not just a gazillion, but also some of the largest ever blown (he holds the world record), along with light effects and lasers. (Through Sept 2.) Tonight at 7:30, tomorrow at 2 and 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 3 and 7 p.m., New World Stages, 340 West 50th Street, Clinton, (212) 239-6200; \$34.95 to \$45.

'JABBERWOCKY' (Sunday) What a brillig, or brilliant, idea: Tales & Scales, the quartet combining music and storytelling, is presenting an updated version of its dramatization of Lewis Carroll's famous nonsense poem about that mythical creature, the Jabberwock. O frabjous day! At 4 p.m., Brooklyn Conservatory of Music, 58 Seventh Avenue, at Lincoln Place, Park Slope, (718) 622-3300; \$10; \$5 for students and 65+.

'A KID'S LIFE: THE MUSICAL' (Sunday) The kid's life here may not be quite familiar to New Yorkers: Zack, 5, lives in a town, which he explores with his dog and his friend Zoe. But there are elements that might be associated with a city that never sleeps: an owl and a talking clock. At 2 p.m., Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Flatbush and Nostrand Avenues, Flatbush, (718) 951-4500, brooklyncenteronline.org; \$12.

MILKSHAKE (Tomorrow) This is the kind you taste with your ears. A band for young rockers (3 and older), Milkshake will offer songs from a CD whose title continues the sweet theme: "Bottle of Sunshine." At 1:30 p.m., TriBeCa Performing Arts Center, Borough of Manhattan Community College, 199 Chambers Street, (212) 220-1460; tribecapac.org; \$25; \$15 for students and 65+.

'MACBETH: THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC' (Tonight) Shakespeare and Sinatra may seem a rather unlikely combination, but leave it to the Scots to make "Macbeth" work in a new context. This production is from the Gordonstoun School near Elgin, Scotland (Prince Charles is an alumnus) and will feature its teenage students

and a live band performing Sinatra songs as commentary on the play. At 7, M.S. 51-William Alexander School, 350 Fifth Avenue, near Fourth Street, Park Slope, (718) 369-7603; \$5; \$100 for preferred seating and a benefit reception afterward.

PERCUSSION PEOPLE (Sunday) Instrument building is on the menu at the interactive monthly concerts presented by this group, which explores the range of percussion instruments across cultures. Young drumming enthusiasts (and what child isn't one?) are encouraged to arrive at 10:30 and make their own instruments for the concert at 11. At the Players Theater, 115 Macdougall Street, Greenwich Village, (212) 352-3101; \$15.

JUSTIN ROBERTS AND THE NOT READY FOR NAPTIME PLAYERS (Tomorrow) Mr. Roberts, once the leader of the indie-rock band Pimentos for Gus, is now doing indie for the youngest rockers. In this concert he features tunes from his latest album, which has a title all families can relate to: "Meltdown." At 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., [Symphony Space](#), 2537 Broadway, at 95th Street, (212) 864-5400, [symphonyspace.org](#). Tickets in advance: \$23 and \$18; \$13 for 12 and under. Day of show: \$25 and \$20; \$13 for 12 and under. Members: \$19 and \$14; members of Just Kidding Club, \$8.

TEENS 'N COMEDY AND KIDS 'N COMEDY (Tonight and Sunday) The class clown gets applause, not detention, at these series, in which comics 11 and older perform stand-up. The teenage version has a rule: no one under 14 allowed. (Don't worry, the material is clean.) "Teens 'n Comedy," tonight at 6; \$10 with a one-soda minimum. "Kids 'n Comedy" on Sunday at 1 p.m.; \$15 with a one-soda minimum. The Gotham Comedy Club, 208 West 23rd Street, Chelsea. Reservations required: (212) 877-6115.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH GARMENT FACTORY WORKSHOP (Sunday) Experience what it was like for early immigrants to work in a clothing factory — except have a lot of fun. This drop-in program at Yeshiva University Museum includes trying out the pedal on an antique sewing machine and working in teams to produce denim utility aprons to take home. From 2 to 4 p.m., 15 West 16th Street, Flatiron district, (212) 294-8330, [yumuseum.org](#). Free with admission: \$8; \$6 for 65+, students and 5 through 16; under 5, free.

YOUTH TRACK & FIELD & WELLNESS JAMBOREE (Sunday) All young athletes can show their stuff in this competition, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., sponsored by the New York Road Runners Foundation. Events for ages 4 to 10 are in the morning; those for 11 to 15 are in the afternoon. Everyone takes home a ribbon and a T-shirt. At the New Balance Track & Field Center at the Armory, 216 Fort Washington Avenue, at 168th Street, Washington Heights, (212) 423-2227; [nyrrfoundation.org](#); free for 15 and under; \$2 for adults.

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