

# The Shore

by Milla Goldenberg

By the time we meet the well-to-do Tenney family in Alison Tatlock's smartly written and Adam Prince's skillfully directed *The Shore*, now on view at the newly renovated Stage 52 Playhouse, matriarch Margaret A. is busy preparing her husband and two children for her imminent demise from breast cancer, because, as husband James I. points out, "she can't travel unless the house is clean."

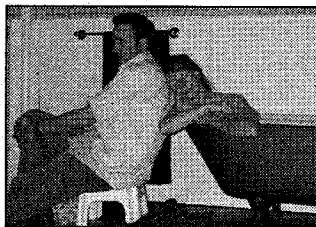
So she repeatedly scrubs the coffee table and fiddles with the couch cushions while working through a list of potential hobbies her husband can up take once she's dead — to ensure that he doesn't get bored and lonely. When her two grown children, Margaret B. and James II, return home for a weekend visit, the family begins to unravel in all its fabulous (and oftentimes humorous) dysfunction. Family secrets are finally spilled, long-held hunches are confirmed or disproved, and problems are finally dealt with head-on, despite mom's lifetime of effort to sweep them all under the rug.

Yet the characters' constant bickering belies the great affection they truly feel for one another, on display when the two

Margarets sit down to write the elder's eulogy. The men also

engage in some male bonding via a croquet game, and the whole family gets together to watch home movies of their long-ago trips to the shore, which makes them long for the fun-filled beach days before disease and dishonesty came to ruin the family.

Led by seasoned actor Gates McFadden, perhaps best known for her role as Dr. Beverly Crusher on *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the entire cast offers convincing performances that serve as a pleasant reminder that good theater can still be found in Los Angeles. And this is truly great theater — with a strong script that explores family dynamics that we can all recognize and relate to. The set and lighting also reflect the mood perfectly. Just be forewarned that full frontal nudity, both male and female, is part of the performances, and make sure to bring tissues, because *The Shore* packs a punch that will likely hit you square in the heart. *See listing.*



David Wiater & Laura Jane Salvato in *The Shore* at Stage 52