

ARTS AMERICA

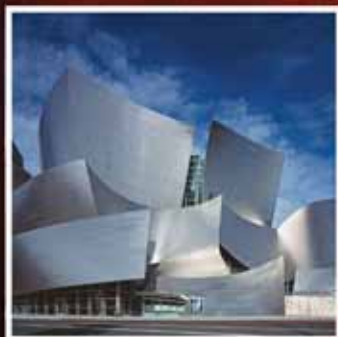
Enjoying the Best Art Museums, Theater,
Classical Music, Opera, Jazz, Dance,
Film, and Summer Festivals in America



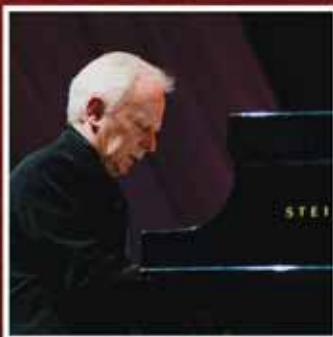
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ARTS AMERICA

**Enjoying the Best Art Museums, Theater,
Classical Music, Opera, Jazz, Dance, Film,
and Summer Festivals in America**

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WHY ARTS AMERICA?

by Jeffrey Compton, Executive Editor

Judy lives about 30 minutes by train from Chicago. A schoolteacher by trade and a pianist by hobby, she makes a resolution every year that she'll enjoy more classical-music concerts, but she never manages to get it together. Whenever she has the time, she does not have the money and whenever she has the money ...

Primarily due to Steve's career, he, Kathryn, and their two children live in a small town in Oklahoma. They love the town and their neighbors; they especially like the schools. But the cultural life is very limited. Steve and Kathryn have never investigated the museums, theater, or opera in nearby Dallas. Instead, they blow their wad on two annual weekend trips to New York City.

Cindy lives in Brooklyn—and recently lost her fashion-design job due to downsizing. She's trying to make ends meet freelancing, but doesn't know if she'll ever be able to enjoy the arts in New York again.

A home contractor from Los Angeles, Joe barely graduated high school. As a favor to his new girlfriend, he attended a performance of Handel's *Messiah*—and really enjoyed it. Now he wants to explore the world of classical music (and visit an art museum), but doesn't have a clue where to begin.

Randy is on the road two weeks of every month—and he gets little advance warning as to where he'll be next. He loves theater and classical music, but because he doesn't have time to do research, he usually ends up at the nearest multiplex seeing the same movie playing two blocks from his house.

Sound familiar? Maybe you know these people. We certainly do.

We, the editors of *Arts America*, range in age from 20 to 65 and hail from

WHY ARTS AMERICA?

Texas, California, Washington, D.C., and New York City. We're all passionate about the cultural arts in America. We like to visit museums and attend performances and concerts (as well as late-night jazz joints) everywhere we go. Neither our time nor our funds are unlimited, so we've learned how to quickly check out what's available and how to get best for the least. We also love to share our discoveries with friends—and it's for these friends (and hopefully many more) that we created this book.

It's wonderful to be an art lover in America. Our country's sheer size, its large, educated, and prosperous population, and diverse geographical and cultural history all combine to create a tremendous artistic smorgasbord. The United States offers many of the best museums, theaters, orchestras, operas, and dance the world has ever known. Jazz is an American invention; Hollywood is the film capital of the world. While we encourage everyone to travel internationally as much as possible, an American doesn't have to go to Europe to fully appreciate the cultural arts. There is much in his own backyard—or at least within 100 miles—to discover and at a much cheaper price than running off to London or Paris.

Why Arts America? It's our hope that by reducing, if not eliminating entirely, some of the most common barriers—lack of time, lack of money, or lack of knowledge—we'll increase the number of positive cultural-art experiences in your lives as well as our own. Some people are happy to go to a museum or see a show or concert once a month. Others like to go three times a week. Whatever works for you is fine as long as you're having a good time and, with luck, a stimulating experience for minimal inconvenience and money.

HOW WAS ARTS AMERICA COMPILED?

Over the past several years, Norma Foote and I have not only enjoyed the fruits of our cultural-arts research, but have also passed along tons of tips to all of our friends (or whomever we're sitting next to on the plane). Several happy recipients of our information and advice have mentioned that we should write a book, especially as no similar source is currently available on the bookstore shelves.

In late 2008 we got serious. Norma and I began compiling a list of all the major theater, opera, dance, and classical-music groups, as well as the non-profit museums, in the country. Using an admittedly quick-and-dirty point system, we selected which cities to explore in this book, including the five urban areas (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.) that are true world-class cultural-arts destinations. In every city we cover, we added information on jazz venues, art movie houses, and multi-art venues.

We would have liked to include many more of our favorite destinations,

WHY ARTS AMERICA?

but size restrictions left out such intriguing places as Anchorage, Austin, Birmingham, Buffalo, Charleston (SC), Cincinnati, Columbia (SC), Columbus, Detroit, Ft. Wayne, Honolulu, Indianapolis, Jacksonville, Little Rock, Louisville, Memphis, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, Phoenix, the Portlands (ME and OR), Princeton, Providence, Raleigh, Reno, Richmond, San Antonio, Santa Barbara, Santa Fe, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, Savannah, St. Louis, Tampa/St. Pete, Tucson, Tulsa, and Wichita—all of which have cultural-arts scenes well worth your time and money to explore. (Note: These cities will be covered on our website at go-artsamerica.com.)

The next step was to assemble the best talent possible to research and compile all the necessary information, then write it up in a way that conveys the excitement these arts institutions and performance groups deserve. On that score, the muses were kind and I can confidently say that the best descriptions were written by neither myself nor Norma Foote, but by one of our other talented editors: Kathleya Afanador, Patrick Allen, Kara Mason, Tiffany DuMouchelle, Sean Kent, Brooke Pierce, Alex Riccomini, Mark Sanderlin, and Melissa Somosky. I'm also blessed that the best Internet expert I know, John Broughton, has also been a good friend for 40 years.

All information submitted by the editors was checked twice, the second recheck just weeks before publication. With human error as well as the effects of the recession, we assume that there are some minor inaccuracies, not to mention a few outright errors. For those we apologize, and promise that when we find out about any error, we'll post a correction on our website.

The primary goal of *Arts America* is to pass along both the passion and the practical, or, put another way, *why* you should enjoy the arts and *how* to enjoy the arts. So make us happy—and *enjoy the arts in America!*

SAVING MONEY AND ENJOYING THE ARTS—AT THE SAME TIME

America likes good entertainment. The stock market, car purchases, and home construction may be down, but movie sales are up. Broadway's 2008–2009 season was a banner year—offering the theater-goer a total of 75 different shows. Many cultural-arts institutions are struggling due to cuts in endowments as well as corporate and government funding, but attendance appears to be more than holding its own. This is a good thing. An artist needs an audience to create and maintain great art.

Whatever the economy, lots of people always want to experience more things cultural, but don't think they can afford it. They read about \$20 museum admissions and \$200 Broadway tickets and quickly conclude that American culture and their pocketbook don't jibe.

Our quick response to this: Wrong.

Yes, you can drop a couple of C-notes to see the best theater, classical music, jazz, and dance, but you don't have to. You can pay full admission price at every museum you visit, but you don't have to. You can pay \$10 every time you want to watch a movie, but you don't have to.

Over the last few decades, tickets and other related costs have increased significantly, but so has the number of available discounts and other cost-cutting methods. In addition, the Internet makes it simple to learn about these discounts and to take full advantage of them.

THE GROUND RULES

Before we start, let's cover some ground rules.

You can't see everything. Nor should you try—you'll just feel overwhelmed. As long as what you're seeing (or hearing) is worthwhile, in your opinion, that's all that matters. You're out to have a good time, not to increase your "most-concerts-attended" cocktail-party chatter. If following our advice allows you to enjoy twelve arts activities a year instead of six, we'll add you to our win column.

Do not spend more than you can afford. Every city we discuss in the upcoming chapters offers excellent art choices for less than \$30 (especially when you factor in various discounts). Have a budget and stick to it; you can do a whole year of wonderful things (even in New York) for the \$450 you didn't spend on *Jersey Boys* tickets.

Do not equate size and price with quality. Three years ago, two of us saw a very small production of *Guys and Dolls* in North Hollywood for \$15 a ticket. The theater held 80 people and the sets were minimal. But the acting, singing, and costumes were first-rate. It was the best production of the Frank Loesser classic we ever saw, far better than the recent Broadway revival at \$75 a ticket (and those were bought at discount). A lot of good art happens in small places.

Never avoid a cultural offering because you feel that you don't understand enough about it. Most performances or exhibitions require little or no background to enjoy them and if you want to learn more before you go, a lot of inexpensive resources (which we discuss) are available. If after a few tries, you decide some cultural happenings aren't your thing, that's fine, but at least you're making this determination based on experience, not fear or ignorance.

Maintain a current art-news network. Knowing what's available as soon as you can is three-fourths of the battle. Under each city we list a few sources for current information, including newspapers, websites, and magazines. These suggestions are strictly jumping-off points; with very little effort you'll find many others (especially blogs) that may be better suited to your particular needs and interests.

MUSEUM DISCOUNTS

Four years ago, the rebuilt Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City opened to much fanfare, much praise, and a \$20 admission fee, which has since been happily paid by scores of unquestioning visitors. Those in

the know pay far less using a variety of discounts, such as the following, that can be found at most museums.

FREE DAYS

Almost every non-profit museum in the world offers free access one day (or part of one day) a week. And because free days differ from venue to venue, you can visit one museum for free on Tuesday, another on Wednesday, a third on Thursday, and so on. Be aware, however, that this is also the best-known museum discount, so expect crowds and long lines, especially if there's a major exhibition. Our advice is to go as early as possible on a free day.

SENIORS/STUDENTS

If you're a full-time student or over the age of sixty (sometimes less), check to see if the museum offers any admission discounts, as well as any other special programs that may be available.

MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

Do you visit a particular museum at least three times a year? If so, it's probably in your best interest to become a member by making a small (sometimes as little as \$35 a year) donation to the museum. Besides supporting a vital institution and getting a tax deduction, you'll soon find that membership has its privileges. The most important are free admission to the museum for one year and information (newsletters and email) regarding upcoming events. Other privileges usually include a gift-shop discount (which can be a godsend near the holidays), free or discounted audio guides, and free or discounted admission to any concert or film programs the museum provides.

Members of the Isabella Gardner Museum in Boston, for example, receive discounted admission to the museum concert series, the longest-running museum music program in the nation, held in the Gardner's intimate and atmospheric Tapestry Room gallery. MoMA members receive free admission to the extensive film screenings held in the movie theaters located in the museum's basement.

BANK OF AMERICA'S "MUSEUMS ON US"

Do you have a Bank of America credit card, ATM card, or check with your name imprinted on it? If yes, then thanks to B of A's Museums on Us program, you have free admission the first weekend of every month to more than 100 museums across America, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the De Young Museum in San Francisco, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. For a full list go to museums.bankofamerica.com.

To address the needs of a wider (and younger) audience, some museums have member-only family days (usually on Saturdays) or increasingly popular social mixers held on Friday nights.

At the higher levels (\$100+), museum members are frequently granted special viewing hours and invitations to exhibition openings, educational programs, and other special events. Several museums offer discounted memberships to students and seniors, while those in the larger cities provide special plans to anyone living 200 or more miles away.

RECIPROCAL MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

Are you already a member of your hometown museum? If so, contact its membership office or check the website for reciprocal privileges at other museums across the country. Higher-level members of the Metropolitan Museum of Art can avoid paying admission to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Wadsworth Atheneum in New Haven, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. For some museums, such as the Newark Museum, the reciprocal museum network is an important factor in maintaining a membership.

Reciprocal memberships aren't limited to art institutions. If you belong to any type of non-profit museum (health, science, natural history, planetarium), botanical garden, aquarium or zoo, you may already have reciprocal privileges that can save you serious dollars when you travel.

OTHER TYPES OF MUSEUM DISCOUNTS

Group Discounts—You don't have to be a member of a large recognized group to get a group discount. Many museums give them to any group of six people who call ahead and all arrive at the same time.

Organization Memberships—The two most common membership discounts are AAA and Public Television, but there are others, such as the local Chamber of Commerce or a city club. If you belong to any of these groups, obtain a recent copy of their brochures or check out their websites for a list of available local discounts. AAA members should develop a habit of asking about discounts almost every time they spend money.

Employer—Larger companies often obtain local-museum discounts for their employees, especially if the company is a donor. It doesn't hurt to ask.

Union—Many unions (especially entertainment and arts related, but others as well) offer museum discounts to members.

Industry Related (AAM)—If you work for or actively volunteer at any non-profit museum, check to see if it's a member of the American Association of Museums and can assist you in obtaining an individual membership, which is good for free admission and major discounts at museums across the country.

THE BEST TIP

If someone, no matter where he or she lives, asked us for the best *Arts America* tip, our answer would be simple: Go to the websites of your favorite museums, theaters, dance groups, etc., and sign up for free email alerts. More and more non-profit and for-profit organizations are seeing the huge advantages of email marketing. Email is cheaper and greener than snail mail and it's instantaneous. A theater offering discount tickets to a slow-selling matinée now uses email to get the word out. Museums hosting inexpensive events or special showings are turning more and more to email and only email.

Initially, don't sign up for email from more than a dozen organizations or you'll be overwhelmed. Also, learn the features and capabilities of your email program, especially regarding junk-mail management and message sorting.

Coupons—Just like commercial business, many museums distribute discount coupons at local hotels, in magazines, or in the popular *Entertainment* annual coupon book.

Pay-What-You-Can Admission—New York museums built on city-owned land (including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History) may ask for a "suggested admission," but are required to accept whatever a person can pay. What should you do? Pay what you can! If you're broke, pay only half or a third, but if you can afford full board, pay that, remembering that we want great institutions to remain accessible and affordable.

No admission—The world-class Cleveland Museum of Art has never charged an admission fee (except for special exhibitions) and recently other museums have also dropped the door tax, including the Baltimore Museum of Art and the nearby Walters Art Museum. In this way, these museums can get more people through the door, thus getting more money from individual members and foundations. We hope this trend continues.

PERFORMANCE DISCOUNTS

Theater and concert tickets cost considerably more than museum admissions. However, considerably more discount opportunities are also available—from small reductions to completely free tickets—if you're willing to do a little homework.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

If you frequent a theater, opera company, or dance ensemble that you would like to attend more often, you should strongly consider subscribing. The overall discount is often considerable for the best seats and even more if you don't mind making little sacrifices in seating and attending on week nights. More important, the subscription process forces you to make decisions as to what you want to see and when to see it. This means you'll actually be in the seats instead of just "thinking about it."

Types of Subscriptions—Subscriptions may be for a full or partial season. Venues that host many different types of performances might have one subscription aimed at classical music fans, another aimed at ballet lovers, one with children's programming, etc. Student and senior subscriptions are offered at even greater discounts. You may even find subscriptions for couples, for a parent and child, and for patrons with a hearing disability (ensuring that your tickets will be for special signed performances).

Subscription Setup—In the old days, you'd subscribe to specific performances, all chosen in advance, receive the tickets in the mail, and go through hell if you had to make a change. While some groups still work that way, many have made it much easier to change your seats. Other groups now send their subscribers flyers for each show, giving information about the performance and the different ways to reserve your tickets. Another variation is a partial subscription, which allows you

VISITING GALLERIES AND AUCTION PREVIEWS

Just because you're not in the market for a million-dollar masterpiece (or even a thousand-dollar masterpiece) doesn't mean you shouldn't visit art galleries or attend art-auction previews. Most of the walk-ins at any gallery don't buy anything, but the gallery prefers any traffic to no traffic. In most cities, galleries hang out together in neighborhoods, such as Chelsea in New York and River North in Chicago, so look up a couple in newspapers and on the Web, then spend an afternoon wandering from one to another. If you happen to like a particular gallery, sign the guestbook or leave a card with your e-mail address. You might be invited to the next opening party.

As interest and value run hand in hand, art auction houses actively market their previews. Nothing raises the bids faster than a bunch of folks taking time out of their lives to admire something. The best way to find out about auction previews is to check out the website of the auction houses in your area or where you plan to visit and sign up for their emails.

to pay a fixed fee or take out a membership, then order all your tickets at a discount on a show by show basis.

Additional Subscription Benefits—Subscribers are usually given a discount on extra single tickets, as well as priority seating, opportunities to buy tickets to special events in advance of the general public, and admission into talkbacks, parties, and other happenings. They will often get discounts to other local arts companies, as well as parking and restaurant discounts.

To Renew or Not To Renew?—If you've purchased a subscription in the past and have gotten enjoyment out of it (and have missed no more than one performance), definitely renew. Was the last season a turkey? First, decide if it was one show or an overall decrease in quality. If the group has a good track record, continue to subscribe, especially if the one objectionable show was just an experiment gone bad (it happens). The main reason we would consider not renewing a subscription is we missed more than one performance in the past and expect the same circumstances in the future. It may be because of travel or job demands, or the theater has an inconvenient or inflexible policy regarding subscribers switching performances.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is kind of a cousin to subscription. Some arts organizations use the terms interchangeably, so if you become a member, you automatically get a season subscription. But for the most part, organizations, especially the larger ones, differentiate them. A subscription ensures that you have a ticket to each performance in the season, but a membership is just a way of supporting the organization, sometimes with a donation of as little as \$25. Usually, there are different levels to membership and the more you donate, the more benefits you receive. Basic perks often include a newsletter subscription and your name listed in the performance program or quarterly newsletter, but as you get higher up the donation ladder, those benefits include more discounts and free tickets, as well as invitations to opening-night parties or even receptions with the cast.

Many of the larger non-profit performance venues (Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Los Angeles Music Center) offer membership programs worth investigating, especially if you already frequent the place. For example, at the basic level, Carnegie Hall members receive access to half-price tickets to several concerts every month and invites to dress rehearsals.

SPECIAL-DAY PERFORMANCE DISCOUNTS

If you only go to a concert or show on Friday or Saturday night, you'll probably pay full board, but a few scheduling maneuvers can mean big savings.

Dress Rehearsals—Thirty years ago it was common for a theater company or orchestra to “paper” the final dress rehearsal in order to have a small friendly audience for the cast to play to. Today, dress-rehearsal tickets are sold as “almost regular” performances (albeit at a very large discount) or given away free to members and senior and student groups.

In our experience, most theater dress rehearsals are run as if it’s the first performance of the show. The action isn’t stopped unless there’s a major problem with a performer. However, classical-music-concert dress rehearsals are usually very informal (we’ve seen people reading a newspaper during them) and can vary widely in what’s presented. Some dress rehearsals offer the complete concert; others are the orchestra practicing one movement of a symphony. Either way can be fun!

Previews—Remember the days when a Broadway show ran two previews, then had an early-evening opening night so the critics could make their deadlines? Sorry, long gone. Not only Broadway, but many regional theaters do at least three weeks of previews, including a press week, before opening night. This is the main reason that theater reviews have lost almost all sense of spontaneity. Not only are preview performances cheaper to attend, it can be a lot of fun to pre-guess the critics.

There is, of course, one major downside to attending a preview: You could be seeing a bomb that you would have otherwise avoided after the notices came out. For us, however, that has been a very rare experience. In fact, Jeffrey Compton was glad he saw two of Broadway’s most recent short-run musical disasters: *Glory Days* and *The Story of My Life*. However, a couple of early-preview performances have been spoiled by a sound problem or a set not moving, which was easily fixed before the next performance. For that reason, we recommend avoiding the first two or three previews.

Weekdays—Tuesday is the slowest night for any performance week. Wednesday is next, followed by Thursday. And unless the show is a complete sell-out, tickets are usually cheaper and available if you go at these times. Note: If you do go during the week, especially Tuesdays, double-check curtain times, which are frequently earlier than Friday or Saturday. On Broadway, weekday evenings aren’t cheaper, though discounts are far more abundant, but Wednesday matinées are often priced a bit lower than other performances.

EMAIL DISCOUNTS

Direct—Nothing is cheaper or quicker than email and almost every form of cultural-arts performance group uses email to distribute discount information (usually via discount codes) to their current shows. You don’t

have to be a member or subscriber, though you frequently get better-quality email if you are; just visit the website and see where you can sign up for emails.

Through Third Parties—Many towns (especially, as you might guess, New York) have organizations, usually ticket agencies, that regularly send out discount notices on shows.

DISCOUNT WEBSITES

Half-Price and Deep Discount—Although Broadway’s well-known half-price TKTS booth isn’t online yet, many other cities have half-price ticketing services that allow you to purchase day-of-show tickets online or sometimes even days in advance. In addition, websites like Goldstar.com offer significant discounts on tickets to performance events in several cities. Just get on the email list to learn about their offerings in advance. New Yorkers who qualify for TDF membership can use the extensive website (see “New York City Discounts”).

Discount Codes—Why more people don’t use discount codes, we’ll never know. They’re much more convenient than any half-price booth, because you can use them to get your tickets well in advance and from the comfort of your home. Sites like Playbill.com and TheaterMania.com allow you to access these codes by signing up for free, or you can find many of them at BroadwayBox.com. Discount codes are distributed in numerous other ways too, including snail-mail flyers and Telecharge e-mails. And here’s a tip: Take the code to the box office and buy your tickets in person if you want to save on service and handling fees.

GOOGLING YOUR WAY AROUND

Learning a new public transportation system can save you money, but it can also cost you valuable time. The Internet to the rescue! Some cities, such as San Francisco, have centralized public-transit planners (transit.511.org) for their metropolitan areas. If one doesn’t exist (or you can’t find one for your needs), we recommend Google Maps, which requires only a few quick steps. Once you’re in the application, enter the address of your destination. Then click the “Get Directions” link (upper left) and enter the address where you’ll be starting from. Finally, change the mode from “By Car” (the default) to “By Public Transit” and click “Get Directions.” More and more cities are being added to this system every day, so check back frequently to see if your destination (or hometown) is included.

Papering Services—“Papering” is mostly a New York thing right now (though L.A. is coming on), but it’s probably the best way to see a maximum of performances for a minimum of cost. With Theater Extras, for instance, you pay an annual membership fee of \$99, then only a \$4-per-ticket service charge for any event you see through the year. Each day you can log in to the database and see that tickets are available for different Off-Off Broadway shows and performance events, as well as tickets for some Off-Broadway and even the occasional Broadway show.

Resale—When people can’t use their already-purchased tickets, they often sell them on websites such as Craigslist, eBay, and Stubhub; to entice buyers, they often sell the tickets for less than face value. Beware, though: Frequently, the people selling tickets on these sites are actually brokers. Summertime in New York City brings a cottage industry of folks willing to stand in line for free Shakespeare in the Park tickets, then sell them online for \$30–\$150 a pop, depending on how popular the particular show is.

DAY-OF-THE-SHOW DISCOUNTS

What, you want to go today and still get a good deal on tickets? Don’t despair, you have some options.

Half-Price Ticket Windows—New York has three, Boston has two, and they’re popping up in many other cities across the country. Out-of-towners who just want the experience of a live show, but aren’t picky about which one, gravitate toward these booths, which sell half-price tickets on the day of performance. In-the-know locals also love them, as a way to get a cheap culture fix. Don’t go expecting to find any “hot-ticket” shows or concerts here, since the specialty is under-sold performances. But don’t let the fact that these shows aren’t smash hits deter you, either. We’ve seen numerous gems this way, many of them better than some of the overpriced and overpraised sell-out shows.

Rush/Lotteries—In the beginning, Rush tickets, usually \$20 front-row seats, were sold on the basis of first-come first-served. But to prevent kids from spending the night on the sidewalk and scalpers from snapping up too many of these cheap tickets, most shows that offer Rush tickets now distribute them in a lottery held at the theater a few hours prior to curtain. Prices are usually \$20–\$30 and often must be paid in cash right away if you win. Policies vary slightly depending on the show, so always check at the box office or online (Playbill.com keeps an updated list of Rush info) in advance.

Coupons—Though it isn’t as simple as clipping coupons for groceries, coupons for performing-arts companies can at times be found at hotels, in local magazines, in the *Entertainment* coupon books, and inside programs for other local arts events.

Seniors/Students—Student and senior discount policies vary considerably depending on the venue or show, but most offer them, so inquire at the box office or check the website. Student ticket discounts tend to be greater than senior discounts. Sometimes these discounts are available in advance and sometimes they are designated as Rush (you can get them only on the day of performance). Unfortunately, seniors are usually left out in the cold when it comes to getting discounts for Broadway shows and national tours.

OTHER DISCOUNTS

Group Sales—Group discounts are probably the most common discount of all. Every arts organization likes to have a guaranteed full house, so they're always willing to offer a discount to groups. The average minimum to qualify for a group discount is 10 people, but the number may be less (for a venue that has trouble filling seats) or more (15–20 for a popular venue or show). And the more people you add to your party, the bigger the discount gets. If you're able to regularly put together a sizable group to see a show, you'll soon find yourself being contacted by shows or organizations in advance offering you even better deals.

Ushering—If you're willing to work a little for it, you can get free admission to all kinds of venues by serving as an usher. Many organizations, particularly the smaller non-profits, let you sign up for a designated performance, show up an hour before curtain, stuff some programs, help people to their seats, and clean up a bit afterwards; as a reward you enjoy the show for free. Some organizations put their ushers through a more formal process in which they attend an orientation and are expected to usher on a semi-regular basis.

Standing Room—If the show is sold out, it may sell standing-room "seats" in the back of the theater. Of course, policies and the quality of the view vary from venue to venue.

Affiliate Discounts—As with museums, you might be able to get discounted tickets through your PBS membership or other groups you belong to.

Employer—Big companies or major institutions, including schools, often acquire discounts on behalf of their employees or students (this is especially common for organizations that the company has donated to).

Union—Members of some unions, particularly those that serve people in the arts and entertainment industries (e.g., Actors Equity, Screen Actors Guild, Writers Guild, etc.), are sometimes eligible for discounts. In New York City, freelancers billing more than \$10,000 a year can join the Freelancer's Union, which offers a variety of arts-related discounts.

Industry-Related—Does your dance group, chorus, or orchestra be-

THE BEST SEATS?

Some folks aren't happy unless they're sitting mid-orchestra, especially if they might run into someone they know. Others are willing to sit anywhere for the right price, as long as they can see (for theater and dance) or hear (for musical events). Norma Foote is just under five feet, so balcony seats are better for her, while at six-two, Jeffrey Compton prefers a seat on the aisle. One thing they both do, though, is note the layout of almost every theater they frequent, so they can take advantage of the best seating deals.

For example, the last few rows of the orchestra at Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center (home of the New York Philharmonic) are not only the cheapest in the auditorium, they get every note. The top row in the American Airlines mezzanine has excellent sight lines and the best prices, as do the farthest rows in the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. The Carnegie Hall balcony, however, is cramped, at the top of four long flights of stairs, has a terrifyingly steep pitch, and the restrooms are a floor below.

long to a national service organization (such as Dance/USA, America Orchestra League, Chorus America, or Opera America)? Check to see if you're entitled to any discounts, especially if you're visiting another city. This applies to board members as well as performers.

Credit-Card Discounts—American Express and Visa Signature card holders are often eligible for certain performance-related advantages, such as getting in on advance ticket sales. This is nice, but it doesn't mean there's a discount involved. However, rewards points and special offers available through these cards can sometimes equal free or discounted tickets.

FILM DISCOUNTS

Either because films are so popular with the mainstream or movie tickets are already fairly inexpensive relative to, say, opera tickets, movie-theater owners seem reluctant to offer discounts. However, we've discovered several ways to get your flick fix (plus a little free popcorn) at a discount.

Free Screenings—Anywhere from a few weeks to several months prior to the official release of a movie, it may be screened in several cities to test audience reaction or give critics a chance to view it. Free tickets are handed out to people on the street in order to fill up seats. Passes are often distributed outside cineplexes during the day or when movie screenings let out.

Once you've attended one, you can usually get on an email or call list to be invited to future screenings. Also try signing up at a website like USAAudiences.com. The catch is that some of these screenings are in the afternoon or early evening before the nine-to-fivers get off work. Furthermore, attendees cannot be involved in the media or film industry.

Free Passes—Local entertainment weeklies or magazines like *Time Out New York* give out free passes through regular drawings all the time. Usually, you just have to go to a Web address and submit your email/contact info to be considered. Radio stations often give out passes to listeners who call in at the right time or can answer a special quiz question.

Matinées and Off-Peak Hours—Most movie theaters sell tickets for a few dollars less in the afternoon when they have a harder time filling seats. AMC Theaters sell tickets to morning showings (Friday thru Sunday and on holidays) for half-price.

Discounts for Students, Seniors, and Kids—Many theaters offer discounts for seniors, students with valid ID, and for children.

Special Weekday Deals—Check with your local movie houses to see if they offer any bargains on slow days. Tuesdays are most often targeted as “bargain” days, but some theaters discount prices on other weekdays as well.

Second-Run Movie Houses—Often referred to as “dollar theaters” (though prices can vary anywhere between 50 cents and a few bucks), these second-run theaters are a good way to see a flick on the big screen without paying big prices, as long as you're willing to wait a couple months after a movie's theatrical release.

Coupons—Coupons for movies are hard to come by, but you can often find them in the *Entertainment* coupon books.

Rewards Cards—Check to see if your favorite movie chain or theater offers a rewards card. AMC's MovieWatcher card and Regal's Crown Club reward customers primarily with free popcorn and drinks, but if you rack up enough points, you can qualify for free or discount movie tickets as well.

Memberships—Some smaller “art-house” movie theaters have membership programs good for significant discounts on tickets, plus admission to member-only events and other perks. A few large arts organizations, such as the Brooklyn Academy of Music or the Museum of Modern Art, offer small theaters for movie screenings; membership at BAM or just a one-day admission ticket to the MoMA will get you free and discounted admission to many films.

WHAT TO DO WITH TICKETS YOU CANNOT USE?

Three months ago you purchased two tickets to the ballet, but a week before the curtain goes up, you find out that your pregnant niece is suddenly getting married that weekend. What do you do?

The first thing is to contact the organization that sold you the tickets and find out what your options are. Even though the tickets say non-refundable non-exchangeable, most theaters know that they're in the goodwill business and will try to help you. When William Compton Jr. died in Los Angeles, he had more than \$1,200 worth of unused tickets. Jeffrey had to contact more than a dozen theaters, but all of them (with the sole exception of the Pasadena Playhouse) agreed to credit a full refund back to Bill's credit cards.

Subscribers and members can usually call the organization and arrange to go on a different night, or attend to the entire process over the Internet.

If the theater won't take back your tickets, you can try to sell or give them to your friends or to the general public on eBay, Craigslist or a site like StubHub using Paypal to collect the funds. As with all Internet transactions, use common sense and read the help sections of the various sites to make sure that you understand your protections. You can also post a sign at work, around your apartment or condo complex, or at the gym.

Night of the show and still no takers? Consider going to the theater and selling the tickets by the door. If you can before you go, contact the theater or check the website to see if the show is sold out. That will help you determine how much to ask. In most cities, selling personal tickets for a profit isn't a crime, so you don't have to be super discreet about it. Just go to the theater 60–90 minutes before curtain and hold the two tickets where everybody can see them. Have the seat numbers and locations written down on a separate piece of paper so someone can check to see where the seats are without handling the tickets. Most importantly, agree to the price before turning over the tickets—and it does not hurt to see the money first. Of course, if you're at your niece's wedding, you might have to find someone who can sell your tickets at the theater for you, preferably someone you trust.

Finally, if you can't trade the tickets in or don't want to deal with a stranger-related sale, find out if they can be donated back to the theater or venue (which has to be non-profit) for a tax deduction. At least you can get a portion of your money back, and some organizations even credit the donation toward membership privileges.

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

There are many ways to prepare for a cultural event. Some people like to read as much as they can about it, so they know what to expect. Other people enjoy trying new things and don't want a review of what they'll be seeing; they're happy going into the concert, play, opera, or museum without any preparation. Either approach (or something down the middle) is a matter of choice. There is no right or wrong.

One way of learning about a visual or performing art is very simple. Just go to an event and decide if it's something that you enjoy doing. Two parts of the learning experience when you see a play or listen to music or watch dance are your reactions to the specific piece and the overall art form. If you liked a symphony, go back again to enjoy another classical event. Or go out and try something totally different. While some people like to have a lot of alternatives they're interested in, others concentrate on just one or two genres and discover all they can find within those choices.

Do you need a great deal of arts-related knowledge to appreciate a museum visit, symphony, jazz concert, or Broadway musical? The answer is based on what we mean by "appreciate." None of the arts requires background to enjoy them, but to better understand what the artists are communicating, a little knowledge of both the art and the specific work can be helpful.

Why is Mozart a genius? Why are *Oklahoma* and *Citizen Kane* considered milestones? Who were the Impressionists? What is bebop? Who are the two bums waiting for in *Waiting for Godot* (which, by the way, is still un-

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

der dispute!)? Researching the answers to these types of questions before you go can enhance the experience.

Does that mean you need to have substantial knowledge or do a required amount of specific homework before each performance or activity to enjoy yourself? Of course not.

Sometime in our lives, we may have passed on the opportunity to try something new when a lack of specific information made us uncomfortable about the experience. However, skipping a trip to a hometown championship football game because we don't understand what a safety is or can't differentiate between a tight-end and a fullback is a waste of a good time. Not only would we miss out on some fun, but attendance would probably increase our appreciation and knowledge of the game.

In 1975, Jeffrey Compton was touring Europe with a good friend who let Jeffrey plan the entire two-month trip, except for three days that the friend, now a professional musician, wanted to spend in Montreux, Switzerland, attending the legendary jazz festival. At that time Jeffrey had never listened to a jazz recording, but to preserve the camaraderie of the trip, he reluctantly went along—and over the course of two days saw live performances by Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie, and dozens of other jazz greats. A love affair was born that weekend that is still going strong.

Thirty years later, Jeffrey persuaded his brother Bill to attend an Edvard Munch (*The Scream*) retrospective at the MoMA on what would be his brother's last trip to his beloved New York City. Although Bill "didn't understand art" and avoided museums, he went along—and was overwhelmed by both the power of the work and what he learned about Munch himself. He spoke of it for months afterward.

No matter how much you know about the arts, at times you'll have no choice but to see a work cold. It's often amazing how much you learn when you watch and listen. Your concentration alone enriches the art.

LEARNING AS YOU GO

All of us have attended an exhibition or performance unprepared, but in almost every instance, we could have taken advantage of resources that cost little in time and money. Most of these resources are provided by the arts institutions themselves, either at the performance, exhibition, or through the website. Like all things in this world, quality varies greatly, but considering the investment involved, they're almost always worth looking into.

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

Museum Website—Almost all museums now create special pages on their site for current and upcoming exhibitions, including short discussions of the artists and period, plus a few high-resolution photographs of some of the works you'll see. It usually takes only 15 minutes to go through the entire presentation. While you're there, you can check out sections devoted to past related exhibitions, especially if they're relevant to what you're about to see.

Museum Audio Tour—Earphones have become de rigueur at almost every major art exhibition, allowing attendees to learn details about some or all of the pieces shown. The audio tour is either included in the price of the exhibition or the museum charges extra for this service, unless you're a museum member. Sometimes the commentaries are wonderfully insightful and add to your knowledge and enjoyment of the exhibit, but all too frequently the audio commentary becomes background noise full of "who-cares" details. We know many patrons who avoid using them altogether, in favor of relying on the information (next to the picture or written on the wall) or prior research. Or if time permits, they'll walk through the show once to see everything, then pick up the audio-tour equipment for a second look at specific works. Many museums are now using iPod technology for their tours, which allows iPod owners to selectively listen to the tour on equipment they're familiar with.

Podcasts—Informational podcasts created/hosted by either the museum staff or third-party guides can be downloaded to your iPod, iPhone, or home personal computer. Quality can vary, but most podcasts are free and can be found on the museum's website, or by searching Google and/or YouTube.

Tours/Lectures—A guided tour of a museum for a specific exhibition or an introduction to the entire museum can be great fun. Conducted by either a member of the museum staff or a docent (a qualified volunteer), the tours can help you see and learn about the highlights of an exhibition quickly. A plus: It's always interesting to see how other visitors on the tour are reacting to the art through their expressions and questions.

As with audio tours, museum policies vary on tours. Smaller museums tend to put them into the price of admission, while larger ones offer both free and paid tours. It's the same with lectures; the always-running audio may be free, but a specific lecture by a visiting expert has a charge (especially if you're not a member).

Performance-Related Websites—One positive trend in music and theater is the increasing number of performance groups putting program notes on their websites a week or so before the event. It's much easier to read it at home—in bigger type—than just before the performance or standing in the restroom line at intermission. The website may also offer

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

additional notes from the director or other artistic professionals, or even audio/video highlights of the show. And all of it's free.

Preview Mailings—Subscribers and patrons, as well as those who give the group their email addresses, frequently receive extensive background information through the mail or over the Web. While it can be very helpful, these mailings are occasionally overwritten by the press department and include mandatory interviews with the stars, all of whom say that this is the most interesting project with which they've ever been involved.

Professional Reviews—Music and theater critics are a dying breed as more and more cash-strapped newspapers cut their arts staff to reduce overhead. Still, a review can be very helpful (especially if it persuades you to see something) as long as you take it as one, albeit informed, opinion. No one critic should prevent you from seeing a show. However, you should

SAVING ON ...

It was tough, but you managed to scrape together the dough for those tickets. Now you can just enjoy the show without thinking anymore about money, right? Wrong. What about getting to the theater? What about dinner? What about drinks afterwards? And what if your date wants a treat at intermission?

Sometimes it seems like the expenses for a simple night out never end. But if you're smart, you can keep the evening within your budget.

First, see if you can get to the venue via public transportation. Theaters and music halls tend to be in well-trafficked areas near subway stations and bus stops. If you can't find any transportation info on the venue's website, call and ask. If you're driving, find out if any free parking is nearby. Sometimes if you're willing to walk a bit, a cheaper lot is a little farther from the theater. You might also be able to find a spot on the street if you arrive early. Some garages offer discounts on evening and weekend parking, so inquire at the garages or hunt around online for coupons.

As for dinner, don't feel like you absolutely have to eat out before attending a performance, and you should never try to combine true gourmet dining and entertainment in one evening. Theater and concert regulars know that this just isn't feasible and settle for many pre-show meals at home. If your only option is to grab a bite out, consider getting a sandwich at a deli or dropping in at a favorite fast-food joint. On a date or a special occasion, look for places that have good prix-fixe deals; res-

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

question dropping dollars on anything receiving universal pans. The best way to get a complete set of opinions is to type the name of the show followed by the name of the theater (or theater group) and the word “review” into Google and see what comes up. Well-written art-exhibition reviews can be especially helpful to read in preparation for a museum visit.

Blogs—Is there anyone who doesn’t have one? For better or for worse, arts blogs are replacing professional music, film, and theater reviews and, much more than their print counterparts, quality can vary greatly. While some are very well-written, we really don’t know the background of who’s writing the reviews and if he or she has any personal or professional conflicts or biases. Treat blog reviews as you would the word-of-mouth comments from friends. If they’ve given you a good tip before, listen a little more closely. Otherwise take it with a large grain of salt.

... THE EVENING EXTRAS

taurants right by the theater often do. (Note: If you really enjoy going out before or after a show, try to patronize the same places instead of jumping around. Regular customers, especially those who tip well, are frequently offered special deals.)

Need an intermission sweet-tooth fix? Whatever you do, don’t pay for the over-priced concessions the theater sells (unless it’s a smaller theater, where they may be more reasonably priced). We advise dropping by a convenience store before the show and stocking your purse with M&Ms or other snacks for your intermission treat. If you’ve got a big enough bag, bring a water bottle from home, too. But be sure to put everything away before the curtain goes back up. No one wants to hear you slowly unwrapping your crinkly Snickers wrapper and gnawing on a candy bar during the performance.

Want a drink or nosh after the show? Check your program to see if it advertises special deals. Theaters frequently make deals with local establishments that offer discounted drinks if you present your ticket stub. (Note: Ignore the “Celebrity Choice” column in New York Playbills, which is all advertiser PR.) If no deals are forthcoming and you’re with a good friend with whom you just want to chat, there’s no harm in finding the nearest pizza place and getting a cheap soda and a table where you can share your thoughts on the performance. After all, the whole point of enjoying the arts is inspiration and communication, not fancy food and high-priced drinks.

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

Pre- (or Post-) Performance Lecture—Classical-music groups (especially the larger symphonies) as well as jazz and dance presenters now offer free talks before the concerts. Their primary value is that you see the performance immediately afterwards and thus will benefit from the information and opinions of the presenter (frequently the conductor or artistic director). Theater groups (and some film societies) tend to do post-performance talks, which allow the actors to participate. If you have twenty minutes to kill after a show, stick around; you'll always hear something interesting.

Program—Programs are the old standby for on-the-spot background, and the variance is fascinating. Some programs (the Boston Symphony is a good example) are written at a Ph.D. level. Others can be tremendously effective at getting across key points. At the bottom are those that contain nothing but the actors thanking their mothers, teachers, lovers, and God. If you haven't prepared at all for the show, read as much of the program as you can beforehand or take it home to enjoy later.

FOR EVEN MORE KNOWLEDGE AND ENJOYMENT

Over the past year, we've asked our editors (and bugged our in-the-know friends) to turn us onto their opinions of the best books, DVDs, CDs, and websites available to learn more about the arts. In all cases we purchased the items and reviewed them personally—and in almost every instance, we agreed with the recommendations.

This is by no measure a complete list. It's just to get you started.

ALL GENRES—THE TEACHING COMPANY

Founded in 1990 by Thomas M. Rollins, former Chief Counsel of the United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources and a graduate of Harvard Law School, the Teaching Company offers more than 260 courses in every major field of academic study, including classical music, musical theater, jazz, and art history. All are taught by "renowned" college professors and are available on either CD or DVD, usually with extensive printed materials.

We reviewed several of these courses and while all of them imparted considerable and valuable information, like many of the professors we had in college, some of presenters had very quirky speaking habits that became quite distracting. Cost can also be a factor, as some sets run upwards of \$250, but almost all of them go on sale sometime during the year. Before purchasing any, you may want to check to see if they're available from your local public library. (Note: The series done on the Metropolitan Museum of Art is outstanding.)

BEGGING A FREE TICKET

Almost all steady theater devotees and concert-goers have been in the situation where a spouse or date has cancelled on them—maybe three days before or maybe at the last minute. But they still want to see the show anyway. They've checked with all their friends and no one is interested, so out of kindness or a desire not to have an empty seat next to them, they offer the ticket on the free section of Craigslist or go to the theater to see if anyone wants it.

If you want to be the lucky recipient of that ticket, here are some suggestions. When answering a Craigslist free ad, tell as much about yourself as possible, including your gender, approximate age, and why you want to see the show. You might even send a picture. Don't include your phone number or mailing address; your email address is enough. It's probably a good idea to say upfront if you're married or in a relationship, so the other party doesn't begin with the wrong agenda. If you get a positive response, which should also have a photograph, agree to meet in front of the theater no less than 20 minutes before the show.

Trying to get a free ticket the night of the show? Tip one: Have a good clean appearance. No one wants to spend two hours sitting next to a bum. Tip two: Stand in front of the theater and ask, "Does anyone have a free ticket they aren't using?" Make sure you say "free," so everyone knows the score. If people there are selling tickets (usually holding them up in their hand), politely say, "I can't afford to pay for the ticket, but if you can't sell it, I'd be glad to have it." Be friendly and don't ask anyone more than once. Most importantly, don't become a pest. Due to complaints, several of the larger venues (including Lincoln Center) are cracking down on insistent ticket begging. You want to see the show, not spend the evening at Night Court!

VISUAL ARTS

Books—*The Art Book* (Phaidon) is a huge general guide to 500 painters and sculptors, ranging from medieval to current, and offers a great overview/introduction to those with a general or beginning interest in art. We also recommend Phaidon's heavier and more expensive *30,000 Years of Art*.

DVDs—It's still a hoot to see a cloistered nun in full habit explaining a Lucian Freud frontal male nude, but the various Sister Wendy's collections are an excellent beginning guide to visual art, especially her *Story of Painting* series. Also recommended is *Civilization: The Complete Series* by Kenneth Clark.

THEATER

Books—Although written more than 40 years ago, *The Season* by William Goldman is still relevant—and extremely entertaining. *Not Since Carrie* by Ken Mandelbaum and *Second Act Trouble* by Steven Suskin offer insight-

CUTTING DOWN ON TRAVEL COSTS

While this may be the only book about enjoying the arts in America, hundreds of excellent guidebooks can help you save on travel costs in every city we discuss. Here, Norma and Jeff pass along a few tips that work for them.

They rarely stay in hotels, preferring to rent private homes or apartments, almost all of which they find on Craigslist. For the price of one medium-priced hotel room (sans taxes), they get a multi-bedroom apartment or house with a full kitchen, laundry facilities, and several nice places to write. The writing of this book began on a porch in southern Vermont overlooking the Berkshires and ended in a Los Angeles garden cabana.

The next concern is food, so Norma usually asks the locals, including the landlord, for tips on where to shop; a large supermarket with good prices is usually nearby. They keep an eye out for sales and at checkout ask if they have to join the supermarket club to take advantage of special deals. Some run the sale through a house account, while others make customers fill out a form and take a card, but either way Norma and Jeff usually save 10%-20%. They don't use Costco or Sam's Club, as the quantities are too large for two people on a short trip.

Many cities don't require a car. If Jeffrey and Norma do rent one, Jeffrey makes a reservation as soon as he can, using both multi-company car-rental sites and sites for the individual companies, then double checks the prices every two weeks up until the day before they pick up the car. Frequently, a better deal shows up. If you go this route, avoid pre-paid reservations through Hotwire et al.; you can't change them. Also, check with your credit-card company to see if they offer upgraded car-rental protection. For example, Jeffrey gets an excellent collision policy from American Express that's \$20 per trip versus \$15 a day from the rental company.

If you tend to use only one or two airlines (or Amtrak), take the time to learn in depth how their frequent-customer programs work, to the point where you know more about them than club personnel. Also find the credit cards that give you the most miles per dollar spent, especially if you pay off your cards every month and don't have to worry about the interest rate.

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

ful and funny discussions of famous musical bombs. For a real memory-lane trip, pick up a copy of a *Theater World*, an annual publication that has come out every year since 1945, or for more recent seasons, *Playbill Broadway Yearbook*. *Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest Shows of All Time* has great pictures and interesting stories and looks good on the coffee table.

CD—David Timson's *The History of Theater* is an informative introduction to drama, especially when read by Derek Jacobi.

DVDs—*Broadway: The American Musical*, a six-hour PBS special, and *Broadway's Lost Treasures Collection*, clips of performances done at the Tony Awards, are both recommended.

Websites—For news, check out playbill.com; for gossip and blogs, go to broadwayworld.com and talkinbroadway.com/allthatchat; and for history, visit the Internet Broadway Database, ibdb.com.

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Books—Any or all of the three classical music books published by National Public Radio (NPR) is a good start: *The NPR Classical Music Companion: An Essential Guide for Enlightened Listening*; *The NPR Listener's Encyclopedia of Classical Music*; and *NPR Guide to Building A Classical Music Library*. For more on Choral Works check out *Choral Masterworks: A Listener's Guide* by Michael Steinberg, containing 47 essays on the major choral-orchestral works of 28 composers, from J.S. Bach to John Adams.

CD—Need a break from listening to classical music, but still want to remain in the muse? Get and play *Richard Fawkes' History of Classical Music*, read by Robert Powell.

DVDs—Two good choices, both with the incomparable Lenny Bernstein: *Young People's Concerts—New York Philharmonic* and *The Unanswered Question—Six Talks at Harvard*.

OPERA

Book—*First Night at the Opera* is a very readable mix of performance stories, personalities, and gossip.

CD—Also by Richard Fawkes and also read by Robert Powell (see above) is *History of the Opera*.

JAZZ

Books—The recently published *Moving to Higher Ground—How Jazz Can Change Your Life* by Wynton Marsalis is a joy to read, especially when complemented with the more informational *History of Jazz* by Ted Gioia or *What Jazz Is: An Insider's Guide to Understanding and Listening to Jazz* by Jonny King. Autobiography fans should check out *Miles* (Miles Davis); biography fans might want to read *Coltrane—The Story of Sound* by Ben Ratliff.

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

DVDs—*Jazz—A Film* by Ken Burns is 19 hours long and spends too much time on Armstrong and Ellington and too little time on more modern artists, but it’s still the most enjoyable way to learn about jazz. Also check out the new *Jazz Icon* box sets featuring live performances of the greats.

Websites—All About Jazz (allaboutjazz.com) is just that—news, reviews, background stories and forums. Down Beat Magazine website (downbeat.com) is another good choice.

APPRECIATING CHORAL MUSIC ...

[Editor’s Note: Robert Page is the Paul Mellon Professor of Music at Carnegie Mellon University and the Music Director Emeritus at the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh.]

So you want to attend a choral concert? Be careful, for you can easily (and often) get sonically screwed.

There’s a well-spread rumor that all choruses are alike—just a gang of people singing, much like a sing-along at a bar or Sunday morning church choir. It really ain’t so! I have to admit that “everyone can sing”; the Being put the same sort of vocal folds in the throats of every human (and some animals). But learning really to sing, and not just sing, is the important difference. A concert by a choral ensemble of trained, versatile, educated singers is a thrill no other music ensemble can match. But a concert by a choral ensemble of people who “just love to sing” doesn’t make it.

So the question arises: What makes a quality choir or chorus? The expertise of the individual singer in a choral ensemble is the bottom line. Some people have the idea that a trained singer cannot possibly match the sound (called “blend”) of another voice. Wrong. A quality chorus has singers who sing more than one way. Professional singers don’t change the music to accommodate their own inadequacies, but have the ability to adjust their vocal technique to fit the music. Palestrina isn’t sung like Verdi; Josquin isn’t the same as Brahms; Schubert is different from Sondheim.

I suggest that two types of choral concerts can attract you. One is the large-scale work, usually chorus and orchestra, with the chorus numbering around 80 to 100 voices. Attend a large symphonic choir, or orchestra and chorus, performing *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff—exciting, earthy, primitive—and you’ll probably want to dance. Alternatively, take in the sheer operatic spectacle of the Verdi *Requiem* or the Prokofiev *Alexander*

FILM

Books—There are a lot of choices, from annually updated guides to coffee-table books, but *Awake in the Dark: The Best* by Roger Ebert is a good place to start. Theater-restoration fans will enjoy *Cinema Treasures: A New Look at Classic Movie Theaters* by Ross Melnick and Andreas Fuchs. It's first a meticulously researched survey of the eras of movie exhibition and second

... BY ROBERT PAGE

Nevsky or the Mahler Second (*Resurrection*) or Eighth (*Symphony of a Thousand*) symphonies or the Berlioz *Requiem* (with four brass bands surrounding you, stereophonic to the nth degree!). The pacific and contemplative side of this combination of choral/orchestral works include the touching *Stabat Mater* by Antonin Dvorak and (after the opening declaration) the last part of Chichester Psalms of Leonard Bernstein—12 of the most gorgeous measures of music ever written.

The second type of choral concert is that of the chamber ensemble. Even the most knowledgeable choral buff may not recognize some of the composers. Many of the works presented by chamber choruses are written by living composers, contrasting with the larger works where almost all the composers are dead. But if you identify a chorus (preferably a professional, not amateur) that programs works of Eric Whitacre, Edie Hill, Libby Larsen, Nancy Galbraith, Morten Lauridsen, or Paulus, buy the ticket. You won't be disappointed. I might add that there are beautiful and exciting chamber-size works written by some dead composers (but not dead for too long), such as Samuel Barber (*Reincarnations*), Francis Poulenc (any of the dozens of pieces), Aaron Copland (particularly *In the Beginning*), Paul Hindemith (yep, gorgeous settings of the Rilke texts), and Benjamin Britten (*Hymn to St. Cecilia*).

To enjoy any choral concert, have your "listening ears on," as Judge Judy says. Don't just hear, but listen. The singer is communicating words that touch the heart, enrich the spirit, churn the blood, expand the soul. But you have to be ready to absorb the text as much as the beautiful sounds that carry the text. A choral concert differs from the instrumental concert in that there's a special message that the choral concert is communicating and a specific reaction on the part of the audience is the goal. In an instrumental concert situation, the listener can choose his/her own inner scenario based on the music being played.

NO HOMEWORK REQUIRED!

a series of capsule descriptions of 30 notable examples of those cinema treasures still operating.

DVDs—The best collection of films (and film history) available is *Essential Art House—50 Years of Janus Films*. Beautifully packaged with a 200-page guide, this 50-DVD collection offers the 50 greatest “Art House” films, from *Alexander Nevsky* and *The Seventh Seal* to *Jules and Jim*, *M*, *Pygmalion*, *The 39 Steps*, and much more. It’s pricey at \$700 (though you can get it for considerably less if you look around), but worth every penny.

DANCE

Books—Though some may find it a bit too much like a textbook, *Ballet and Modern Dance* by Susan Au is still the best introductory book in the field. *Speaking of Dance: 12 Contemporary Choreographers and their Craft* by Joyce Morgenroth is both informative and entertaining, especially if you want to learn more about Merce Cunningham, Bill T. Jones, and others.

DVDs—*Martha Graham—An American Original in Performance* contains more than 90 minutes with the Modern Dance originator. *Also check out Balanchine and Bill T. Jones—Dancing to the Promised Land*.

All information provided in *Arts America* is deemed reliable, but isn’t guaranteed and should be independently verified.
For additional updates visit: go-artsamerica.com.

NEW YORK



Much can be said, good and bad, about the New York art scene. The edgy days of the '30s-'40s and the truly experimental '60s are in the past and the Big Apple gets more commercial and expensive every year. But the city still dominates the American (and world) cultural-arts arena like no other. The best in art, from *Portrait of Adele Bock-Bauer* to *Oklahoma*, originates in or finds its way to New York City.

ARTS INFO

PUBLICATIONS

New York Times (nytimes.com)—Excellent feature coverage of all the arts; the reviewers (unjustly perhaps) still have the power to make or break many shows.

TimeOut New York (newyork.timeout.com)—Subscribe for super cheap and have an abundance of NYC events listings (many of them free) at your fingertips each week. Also offers excellent reviews.

Village Voice (villagevoice.com)—New York City's premiere alternative paper isn't as edgy as it used to be, but it's still a great resource for arts lovers—and it's free.

New York Post (nypost.com)—Check out the Wednesday and Friday

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editions for Michael Riedel's newsy (and very dishy) column. It can also be read at nypost.com/entertainment/columnists/riedel.htm.

WEBSITES

Club Free Time (clubfreetime.com/new_york.asp)—An excellent and encyclopedic listing of all the free events (walks, lectures, concerts, theater, etc.) going on in New York. Plus, the Club sponsors special high-quality low-price events for its members, who pay only \$20 a year.

Playbill Online (playbill.com)—The best site for up-to-the-minute theater news and a great resource for insider info, such as weekly grosses and job listings.

Playbill Arts (playbillarts.com)—Covers classical music, opera, dance, and jazz.

TheaterMania (theatermania.com)—Articles, reviews, and comprehensive listings that include many music, dance, and comedy shows, in addition to the Broadway and Off-Broadway listings.

Talkin' Broadway (talkinbroadway.com)—Reviews, columns, and a special board where you can sell (or request) theater tickets and merchandise, but what people really come here for is the dish on the "All That Chat" forum, which features many posters from the theater industry.

Broadway World (broadwayworld.com)—The lively message board here is more youth-oriented and less moderated than "All That Chat"; the site is also loaded with features, press releases, and photos and video.

BROADCAST

"On Stage" (NY 1) features theater-related news, interviews, and reviews, but you must be a Time Warner subscriber to receive it.

"Theatre Talk" (Multiple PBS stations) concentrates primarily on interviews and is co-hosted by Susan Haskins and the irrepressible Michael Riedel.

"Broadway Beat" is a Manhattan public-access show (viewable online at broadwaybeat.com) that covers rehearsals, show openings, and special NYC theater events.

DISCOUNTS

Theater and concert ticket prices in New York City are probably among the highest in the nation, thanks to large visitor and business-account demographics. To make up for it (and thus allow for a local audience), New York has an abundance of discount methods and schemes that you don't find in many other cities.

PAPERING SERVICES

New York's "papering services" perform a dual role: Theaters can get additional bodies into their seats (a big boost for the artists on stage) and the members can get good seats at very little cost. Most frequently, the shows offered are at the very beginning (and/or the very end) of their run, but we're consistently surprised by the quality of the offerings. Among the many Broadway performances we saw through papering services was *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* just five hours before Bill Irwin (George) won the Tony Award for Best Actor in a Play. They also offer extensive and excellent classical music, dance, and jazz/cabaret events. We have friends who only see shows that they can get through a papering service and they consider their cultural lives quite fulfilling.

There are currently four papering services in New York City:

- **Audience Extras** (audienceextras.com): Annual membership fee is \$85, plus an initial deposit of \$30 to start your Personal Reserve Fund. Each ticket is charged off your fund at \$3.50. Very user-friendly site.

- **Play-by-Play** (play-by-play.com): Annual fee is \$107, plus \$3.50 per ticket.

- **TheaterMania** (theatermania.com/gold): Annual fee is \$89 and there are no additional fees for tickets. While this is the cheapest arrangement, we find that they have the least selection.

- **Theater Extras** (theaterextras.com): Annual fee is \$99 plus a \$4 per ticket charge. The relative new kid on the papering-service block, Theater Extras not only has the best inventory, it consistently sends out emails telling members about the latest offerings.

If money is tight, join Theater Extras; however, many folks do sign-up for all four. And one final word on papering services: Unlike other sources of tickets, papering services have little tolerance for no-shows. Warm bodies are their business and if you don't show up, they lose out. Repeated no-showing may cause the service to cut off your membership, so if you have a good reason not to go, then notify them immediately. If you don't have a good reason, then go to the show and have a good time.

THEATRE DEVELOPMENT FUND (tdf.org)

One of the major sources of theater, dance, and concert tickets for in-the-know New Yorkers, TDF operates the TKTS windows in Manhattan (see below), as well as an online ticket-discount service for their membership. The online service is extremely user-friendly (except that you don't know where your seats are until you get to the theater) and the overall ticket inventory and prices are excellent. The trick is obtaining a TDF membership; you must be one of the following: full-time student, full-time teacher, union member, retiree, civil-service employee, staff member of a not-for-profit or-

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ganization, performing-arts professional, or a member of the armed forces or clergy. Upon application you have to prove eligibility, but once you're in you're in! When Jeffrey and Norma came to New York, Norma was able to join TDF, thanks to her teaching background, and Jeffrey had no problem obtaining tickets on her account (using his credit card). He was later able to get his own membership through the Freelancers Union. TDF also sells Off-Off-Broadway vouchers in sets of four for \$36. Although you don't have to be a member to obtain them, it's not always clear which theaters are accepting them on any given night.

HALF-PRICE ONLINE SERVICES

While New York City offers a variety of very cheap tickets (see above), the half-price online deals can be meager. Unlike similar services in other cities, you can't obtain half-price tickets from the TKTS service online; you have to go to one of its booths (see below). Also, the Goldstar's New York section (goldstar.com) doesn't have anywhere near the selection found in Chicago or Los Angeles or even Boston. Worth a free look, but you may be disappointed.

TICKET DISCOUNT SITES (playbill.com; broadwaybox.com; theatermania.com; schooltix.com; seasonofsavings.com)

Perhaps the most reliable sources for obtaining discounted Broadway tickets (as well as tickets to other performance events) on a specific date, including seat numbers, are these five websites, all featuring 15%–50% discounts (which computes to less when you add all the service fees). The best time to hit any of these sites is before the reviews come out, especially for musicals. Tickets for plays can usually be obtained anytime, except for well-reviewed star-studded limited runs. Each of these sites offers free email notification announcing new shows and/or new discounts.

Ticket Central (ticketcentral.com) and Smart Tix (smarttix.com) are good sources for Off and Off-Off Broadway tickets and discounts, especially if you sign up for their email services; plus, Ticket Central has a special site for Student Discounts (ticketcentral.com/student). We've also found several members-only sites that offer the same discounts as the above, but for a small fee. Avoid them!

SPECIALIZED DISCOUNT SITES

Playbill's sister site Playbill Arts (playbillarts.com) offers some discounts on classical music, opera, dance, and jazz. Dancelink (set up through nycitycenter.com) is an email club devoted strictly to dance.

OTHER NEW YORK CITY DISCOUNTS

Audience Rewards (audiencerewards.com)—Recently established by the Broadway League, this loyalty program awards points when you purchase your tickets (from the theaters, not through TDF or papering services) that can be redeemed for tickets, collectables, CDs, etc. As with most loyalty programs (airline miles, casino players clubs), Audience Rewards isn't that impressive on the surface, but those who take the time to really learn the system can shave more than a few dollars off their annual budget. For example, Amtrak Guest Reward points (earned on a Chase MasterCard) can currently be transferred to Audience Rewards and the site has a variety of Broadway tickets at various attainable point levels. Membership is free.

High 5 (high5tix.org)—Dedicated to making the arts affordable for teens, High 5 provides \$5 tickets to hundreds of New York's dance, music, theater, film, and museum events year-round. Plus, each teen can purchase one additional \$5 ticket, so they can be accompanied by one adult, or another teen or pre-teen. Teens don't have to be from New York, but they must have proof of age or school enrollment (a report card will do).

Hiptix (hiptix.com)—Providing discounted tickets to Roundabout Theatre shows for patrons 18–35.

School Theatre Ticket Program (schooltix.com)—This respected Times Square organization provides discount coupons to musicals and plays on and off Broadway, events at Lincoln Center, and other events in New York City. It also assists school groups of 20 or more in getting good seats at the best price.



ASIA SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

725 Park Avenue (at 70th Street)

212-517-2742 • asiasociety.org

Public Transportation: Excellent (convenient to 6 and F subway lines and MTA buses).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good

Hours: Tuesday–Sunday 11 a.m.–6 p.m., with extended evening hours on Friday until 9 p.m. (except July 4 through Labor Day), closed Monday.

Admission: Regular admission is \$10, seniors \$7, students \$5, members free, children under 16 free; groups of 20 or more adults discounted admis-

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sion and personalized tour-planning assistance. Admission is free to all on Fridays from 6 to 9 p.m. (free Fridays suspended July 4 to Labor Day).

Tours: Free

Audio Tours: Free cell-phone audio tour is included in the price of admission.

Membership: \$65 individual membership fee entitles members to unlimited free admission, invitations to members-only exhibition previews and other events, and additional discounts on merchandise. Teacher membership \$50. Discounted \$40 membership available to students, seniors (65+), and associates (those living in the United States beyond a 150-mile radius of New York City).

Other Benefits: The Asia Circle (\$150/annual) is for museum patrons 21–40 and hosts events designed exclusively for its members, spanning the areas of arts, culture, business, politics, current affairs, and social issues.

From the Editors: Established by John D. Rockefeller III in 1956, this museum specializes in the art of south, southeast and east Asia (especially Japan). In 2000, the museum was reconfigured and expanded to include a skylit garden court.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn

718-638-5000 • brooklynmuseum.org

Public Transportation: Very good (2 or 3 subway line to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum B71, B41, B69, B48 buses).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good

Hours: Saturday 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m.–6 p.m., Wednesday–Friday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. First Saturday of each month 11 a.m.–11 p.m.

Admission: \$8 (suggested donation), students and seniors \$4 (suggested donation), children under 12 free. On the Brooklyn Museum's Target First Saturdays, visitors enjoy free art and entertainment each month 5–11 p.m.

Tours: Free and led by museum guides (schedules vary).

Membership: Individual membership fee of \$55 entitles members to free unlimited general admission for one, invitations to members-only preview receptions, free parking during members-only events, and discounts at museum shops. Adults (62+), artists, educators, and students save \$10 on individual membership dues. The \$150 Contributor membership gets you reciprocal admission to other museums.

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From the Editors: An excellent facility forced to play second fiddle to its more glamorous Central Park sister, the Brooklyn Museum has a comprehensive collection of European and American paintings and sculptures, plus an outstanding (and well-explained) Egyptian collection. Check out the *The Dinner Party* by Judy Chicago, a massive ceremonial banquet arranged on a triangular table commemorating important women from history, or join the party each month on Target's First Saturdays when thousands of New Yorkers from all five boroughs enjoy free programs of art and entertainment from 5 to 11 p.m.

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM

2 East 91st Street (at Fifth Avenue)

212-849-8351 • cooperhewitt.org

Public Transportation: Excellent (routes include the Lexington Avenue 4, 5, and 6 subways and Fifth and Madison Avenue buses).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good

Hours: Monday–Friday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Sunday noon–6 p.m.; garden entrance on 90th Street open May–September (weather permitting).

Admission: \$15, students and seniors with ID \$10, Smithsonian Institution members and children under 12 free.

Tours: Free daily tours last approximately 45 minutes. All tours begin in the Great Hall on the main level of the museum.

Membership: Individual membership is \$75 annually and entitles members to unlimited free admission for one person to the National Design Museum and Arthur Ross Terrace and Garden, invitations to exclusive members' exhibition previews, programs and events, and access to the Design Resource Center, including Drue Heinz Study Center for Drawings and Prints, Henry Luce Study Room for American Art, Doris and Henry Dreyfuss Memorial Study Center, and the National Design Museum's Design Archives. It also includes discounts on parking and purchases at selected Manhattan design establishments and a subscription to *Smithsonian* magazine. Also offered is a national/international membership of \$55/annual for individuals living beyond a 150-mile radius of New York City, which includes all benefits of individual membership. Student and senior memberships are offered at \$50.

From the Editors: The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum has been housed in the landmark Andrew Carnegie Mansion on Fifth Avenue since 1976. Built between 1899 and 1902, the 64-room house is an impres-

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sive object of historical design itself, the perfect building to house the only collection in the nation devoted exclusively to historic and contemporary design. With a permanent collection that includes everything from wall coverings and textiles to product design and decorative arts, the museum is a must-stop along Museum Mile for design aficionados and the design-curious. A great destination for families, current exhibitions include such child-friendly exhibits as *Wall Stories: Children's Wallpaper and Books*, featuring works from the permanent collection that explore the relationship between wallpaper and books created for children since the 1870s.

Programming at the museum is particularly hands-on and educational, including events such as the Teen Design Fair, internships for high-school students, and a master's program affiliated with Parson's The New School for Design. But for those just interested in a world-wide journey through historic and contemporary design, treasures are found within these walls.

And while you're there, ask about one of the most intriguing (and controversial) pieces in the collection—an unsigned drawing, *Design for a Candelabrum*, purchased in 1942 and identified some 60 years later as drawn by the hand of Michelangelo.

FRICK COLLECTION AND FRICK ART REFERENCE LIBRARY

1 East 70th Street

212-288-0700 • frick.org

Public Transportation: Very good (6 subway local to 68th Street, M1–M4 bus).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good

Museum Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m., closed Mondays and holidays.

Library Hours: Monday–Friday 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Saturday 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m., closed Sunday, holiday weekends, Saturdays in June and July, and throughout August. (Note: First-time researchers must bring a photo ID and arrive before 3 p.m. on weekdays or 11 a.m. on Saturdays.)

Admission: Regular admission \$15, seniors (62+) \$10, students with valid identification \$5; Sunday pay what you wish 11 a.m.–1 p.m.; group discounts should be made by telephone at least two weeks in advance at 212-288-0700 or by e-mail to groupvisits@frick.org.

Tours: Free—A 22-minute audio-visual program titled “The Frick Collection: An Introduction” is shown in the Music Room every hour on the half-hour from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Audio Tours: Free

Membership: Individual membership is \$60 annually and includes un-

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limited free admission for one person for one year, discounts on purchases at the Museum Shop, a subscription to the members' magazine, and an invitation to the new-members' reception. Discount memberships for students are \$25; Non-Resident membership is \$40 (member must reside beyond 100 miles from New York City).

Other Benefits: Contributing Friend membership (\$200/annual) gets you reciprocal admission to other museums. Sustaining Friend membership (\$600/annual) gets you special visiting privileges and invitations to opening parties.

From the Editors: The Frick Collection is housed in the neo-Classical mansion built by Henry Clay Frick in 1913–14. Set back from Fifth Avenue by an elevated garden and guarded by three large magnolia trees, the estate is an art sanctuary. Inside are 16 galleries filled with masterpieces of Western painting, sculpture, and decorative art, including portraits by Rembrandt and Valésquez, exceptional 18th-century French furniture and Sévres porcelain, and the masterworks of Bellini, El Greco, Holbein, and Titian. For those with a special interest, the Frick Collection recently gained a bequest of 25 clocks and 14 watches dating 1500 to 1830. This small but immaculate collection is a quirky break—if you need it—from the staggering collection of big names (Corot, Degas, Goya, Turner, Vermeer, Whistler; the list goes on) that line the galleries. Note that the museum is not very family-friendly; in fact, it doesn't admit children under 10 and children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

1071 Fifth Avenue (at 89th Street)

212-423-3500 • guggenheim.org

Public Transportation: Very good (close to subway 4, 5, or 6 and MTA buses).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good, except for the High Gallery, at the top of the first ramp and only accessible by two low stairs.

Hours: Saturday–Wednesday 10 a.m.–5:45 p.m., Friday 10 a.m.–7:45 p.m., closed Thursday.

Admission: Regular admission \$18, students and seniors (65+) with valid ID \$15, children under 12 free, discounts available for groups of 10 or more; on Friday evenings beginning at 5:45 p.m., the museum hosts pay what you wish, in which admission is by donation. The last tickets are issued at 7:15 p.m. These tickets are not free and cannot be purchased in advance.

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Tours: Free; schedules are subject to change. For daily schedules, consult the electronic signboard near the admissions desk. Gallery Guides are arts professionals available throughout the museum during all open hours to discuss the art on view, the Frank Lloyd Wright building, and the history of the Guggenheim.

Audio Tours: Free

Membership: Individual membership is \$75 annually and entitles members to free unlimited admission for one to all Guggenheim museums (New York, Venice, Berlin, Bilbao), the ability to bypass ticket lines, invitations to exclusive members-only exhibition previews, free admission for one at Art After Dark: First Friday events (regular price \$20), and a free subscription to *Guggenheim* magazine. A 15% discount is available on membership for students, seniors, and artists at the individual member level.

Other Benefits: Young Collectors' Council individual membership (\$500/annual) and Fellow Associate membership (\$250/annual) allow you reciprocal admission to other museums.

From the Editors: Museum Mile's gem, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum building is an artwork in and of itself. The famous spiraling design by Frank Lloyd Wright has endured for 40 years and was recently unveiled once again after an exhaustive exterior restoration. Inside, you'll find works from the collection—Beuys, Chagall, Kandinsky, Klee, Monet, Twombly—generally housed in the tower galleries, while one central exhibit sprawls from the ground floor up the spiraling rotunda. Recent exhibitions of note have included Catherine Opie's mid-career retrospective of explosive portraits and meditative landscapes and Chinese artist Cai-Guo Qiang's rotunda exhibition *Cait Guo Qiang: I Want to Believe*, featuring his installations, unique gunpowder paintings, and videos.

Programming includes free events such as Just Drop In, a program for families to explore galleries with an educator who leads creative and interactive projects. The basement floor of the museum opened to the public in 2001 as the Sackler Center for Arts Education and features studio art, computer and multimedia labs, an exhibition gallery, resource center, and theater where current exhibition-related programming takes place every day.

HISPANIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

Audubon Terrace, Broadway (between 155th and 156th Streets)

212-926-2234 • hispanicsociety.org

Public Transportation: Excellent (1 subway line to Broadway and 157th Street and bus access).

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Handicapped Accessibility: Poor

Hours: Tuesday–Saturday 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Sunday 1–4 p.m., closed Monday.

Admission: Free

Tours: Free 45-minute tours of the building and collections are given by museum curators or the education department at 2 p.m. on Saturdays.

Membership: Membership is \$50 annually. Benefits include invitations to receptions, exhibition openings, advance announcements of all upcoming programs and events, and access to “friends-only” tours with lectures by curators and conservators on the collections and special exhibitions.

From the Editors: This little-known collection located on the Audubon Terrace features art and artifacts from Spain (including several El Grecos and Goyas), Latin America, and the Philippines.

JACQUES MARCHAIS MUSEUM OF TIBETAN ART

388 Lighthouse Avenue, Staten Island

718-987-3500 • tibetanmuseum.org

Public Transportation: Fair/Poor (accessible from S74 bus, but requires transfer from S.I. Ferry terminal and 10-minute walk).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good

Hours: Wednesday–Sunday 1–5 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday.

Admission: \$5, students and seniors (50+) \$3.

Membership: Individual membership is \$25 annually and includes free unlimited admission to the museum, invitations to special events, and discounts on special museum programs and merchandise. Student and senior membership is \$20.

From the Editors: Tibetan art is displayed in a beautiful Staten Island hillside setting resembling a Tibetan temple and monastery. His Holiness the Dalai Lama blessed the temple during his visit in 1991.

JEWISH MUSEUM OF NEW YORK

1109 Fifth Avenue (at 92nd Street)

212-423-3200 • thejewishmuseum.org

Public Transportation: Very good (convenient to 4, 5, or 6 subway to 86th Street/Lexington Avenue and bus lines).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good

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Hours: Saturday–Wednesday 11 a.m.–5:45 p.m., Thursday 11 a.m.–8 p.m., closed Friday.

Admission: \$12, seniors \$10, students \$7.50.

Free Day: Saturday

Tours: Free 45-minute tours, led by museum-trained docents, meet in the museum lobby at scheduled times listed on the museum website. Audio tours are also free.

Membership: Individual membership is \$75 annually. Benefits include personalized membership card, unlimited free admission for one adult, invitations for two to special members-only previews of new exhibitions, and discounts at local restaurants and parking garages. Membership is 100% tax deductible. Discounted membership (\$55/annual) available for students, seniors, and out-of-town patrons.

Other Benefits: A \$250 membership entitles patrons to receive membership reciprocity at numerous other museums nationwide.

From the Editors: The Jewish Museum contains permanent and temporary collections of art by Jewish artists or featuring Jewish subjects, including a large collection of Jewish ceremonial objects.

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART (The Met)

1000 Fifth Avenue (at 82nd Street)

212-708-9400 • www.metmuseum.org

Public Transportation: Good (convenient to 4, 5, 6 subway lines and cross-town buses).

Handicapped Accessibility: Good (accessible to wheelchair users via the street-level entrance at Fifth Avenue and 81st Street or the museum parking garage at Fifth and 80th).

Hours: Tuesday–Thursday 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday 9:30 a.m.–9 p.m., Sunday 9:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m., closed Monday (except some Monday holidays).

Admission: Suggested \$20, seniors (65+) \$15, students \$10, members free, children under 12 free. Fee includes same-day admission to the main building and the Cloisters. No extra charge for entrance to special exhibitions. Group discounts on parties of 10 or more. School groups from within NYC are free.

Guided Tours: Free; gallery talks and guided tours do not require tickets or reservations. These programs usually last one hour and are geared toward an adult audience.

Audio Tours: General public \$7, members \$6, groups of 14 or fewer \$6

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each, groups of 15 or more \$4 each, children under 12 \$5. Audio guide players are free for visitors who are blind, partially sighted, or hard of hearing, and for New York City high school students with valid ID.

Membership: Met Net is the basic level of membership for visitors who live within a 200-mile radius of the museum. \$60/annual includes free admission, one-time use of the trustees' dining room overlooking Central Park for Friday or Saturday dinner or weekend brunch, Met screen savers, online audio features for selected special exhibitions and the permanent collection, members-only offers in the online Met Store, 10% discount on museum merchandise, and discounts on audio guides.

Other Benefits: Sustaining members (\$500/annual) receive reciprocal membership to 14 other major art museums across the country. Individual members (\$95/annual) get invitations for two to selected previews of two special exhibitions.

From the Editors: The Metropolitan Museum of Art is perhaps the most iconic art museum in New York City; nestled among the greenery of Central Park, this enormous collection of art from around the world is a must-see. Due to the imposing size and breadth of its artwork, it's best for visitors to pick one area, special exhibition, or event on which to focus. For locals, it's a place to wander into again and again, whether you have an afternoon to let yourself get lost deep inside the permanent-collection galleries or you need a special place to duck into from the rain. With admission prices set at suggested amounts, this museum is open to anyone at a pay-what-you-can rate.

Programming for adults includes screenings of feature films and videos related to special exhibitions and the permanent collection, and the popular Concerts & Lectures series (in its 55th year), which present free lectures in conjunction with special exhibitions, the permanent collection, and other related topics.

Extensive programming for children and families includes family orientations (one-hour slide introductions to select special exhibitions), Story Time at the Met podcast episodes that present legends, myths, and other stories related to works of art in the museum's collection, and thematic gallery tours and creative art activities.

Recent exhibitions have included a retrospective of the Italian painter Giorgio Morandi and a selection of work from the permanent collection titled *Provocative Visions: Race and Identity*, but don't miss the rich permanent-collection galleries where the Egyptian, Greek and Roman, and Native American art are housed. In addition, the newly formed Young Members group is dedicated to the specific interests of members ages 21–35 from any membership level.