

calling all culture vultures

Everything you've ever wanted to know about Westchester's best arts subscription series, but didn't know whom to ask.

By Laura Joseph Mogil

Drop that remote and reconnect to your more highbrow side—fall is the perfect time to take advantage of the many arts subscription series offered by our county's leading cultural organizations. "Subscriptions are the best deal of the year—you get to see a wide range of top-notch performing artists usually at a fraction of the rate that you would pay if you bought the tickets individually," says Janet Langsam, executive director of the Westchester Arts Council.

From "Conversations on Creativity, Craft and Career" at The Performing Arts Center to evenings of classical music with Itzhak Perlman and the Westchester Philharmonic, there's something for everyone right in our collective backyard. Here's a sampling of some of the hottest series this side of the City.

DANCE

The Performing Arts Center
(914) 251-6200; artscenter.org

Perfectly timed to celebrate Israel's 60th birthday, this series opens with Tel Aviv-based Inbal Pinto Dance Company on November 7 and 8, bringing a witty blend of modern, ballet, mime, and acrobatic movement to the stage, followed by the Batsheva Dance Company, one of the most influential cultural institutions in Israel (January 30 and 31). Other highlights include Pilobolus, the unconventional and highly innovative company of choreographers and dancer-athletes (February 28); Shen Wei Dance Arts, a Chinese troupe that combines dance, theater, Chinese opera, painting, and sculpture (March 28); and the internationally acclaimed Paul Taylor Dance Company (May 9). "The range of excellent choices is inspiring," says Carol N. Shiffman, dean of Purchase College's Conservatory of Dance. "From great renowned companies to younger, daring choreographers, many voices and cultures will share their extraordinary work." Subscriptions range from \$168.50 to \$240.50, a 20-percent savings off of individual tickets.

MUSICALS

White Plains Performing Arts Center
(914) 328-1600; wppac.com

When Jack Batman took over as executive producer of this center last year, he asked everyone he met what they'd like to see. The unanimous answer was musicals, and Batman wasted no time in putting together the theater's enormously successful "Broadway Classics" subscription series. This season, the series opens with

Oliver, at which you can hum along with the world's favorite orphan to such favorite tunes as "Food Glorious Food," "Oom-Pah-Pah" and "Where Is Love." (November 20 to December 14). Next in line is the romantic comedy *A Little Night Music*, featuring an enchanting score by Steven Sondheim (March 5 to 22). And last but not least is *Hello Dolly*, alive with the personality of one of the most fabulous characters on the musical stage—matchmaker extraordinaire Dolly Gallagher Levi (April 30 to May 17). Subscription series range from \$84 to \$150, and subscribers get the added bonus of 10 percent off additional ticket purchases, the theater's Spotlight Musical (*Camelot*), running from September 26 to October 5.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

Emelin Theatre

(914) 698-0098; emelin.org

With more than a dozen programs to choose from in the Emelin's "Super Saturdays: Family Fun" subscription series, there's no need to ever worry again about keeping your young children entertained and amused. The series opens on October 4 with *If You Give a Pig a Pancake & Other Story Books*, a fantastic presentation of eight mini-musicals based on popular kids' books by Theatreworks USA. Other highlights include the Paper Bag Players' 50th Anniversary Show, featuring old-time favorites and brand-spanking-new productions by this zany and energetic troupe (December 27 and 28); Rebecca Frezza and *Big Truck*, a musical blend of pop/rock, country, and jazz styles with a sprinkling of world music elements and, of course, kid-friendly lyrics (January 31); and Grammy Award-nominated musician, entertainer, singer/songwriter and storyteller Tom Chapin, hailed by *Billboard* magazine as "the best family artist around" (May 9). While individual tickets are \$234 for adults and \$169 for children, when you subscribe to five or more shows, you get a 25 percent discount; sign up for all 13 to get 30 percent off.

COMEDY

Academic Arts Theatre

Westchester Community College

(914) 606-6262; sunywcc.edu

Need a laugh? Head on over to WCC where the "Comic Note Zone" series opens on September 27 with the hilarious *Chicago City Limits in One State, Two State, Red State, Blue State*. For this timely election show, the CCL cast goes head-to-head with the faces, places, and events that are shaping the 2008 elections, bringing to life debatable debates, candid candidates, and the carnage of a campaign trail. You're sure to keep that smile on your face with the second program, *An Evening with Groucho*, featuring award-winning actor/director/playwright Frank Ferrante recreating his acclaimed portrayal of legendary comedian Groucho Marx. Hailed by the *Chicago Tribune* as "nothing short of masterful," the two-act comedy is packed with the best Groucho one-liners, anecdotes, and songs, and reacquaints audiences with the likes of brothers Harpo, Chico, Zeppo, and Gummo, plus Charlie Chaplin, W.C. Fields, Greta Garbo, and more (April 25). The two-part series is \$34 (\$6 discount). The laughter? Priceless.

CONVERSATIONS

The Performing Arts Center

(914) 251-6200; artscenter.org

You may have heard Isaiah Sheffer, host of the popular WNYC New York Public Radio program *Selected Shorts* on air, but here's your chance to get up close and personal with him as he speaks intimately with some of the most distinguished artists of our time. This new four-part series, entitled "Conversations on Creativity, Craft, and Career," includes interviews with legendary actress Frances Sternhagen (October 27), dance luminary Carmen de Lavallade (November 17), bestselling author Frank McCourt, (February 2), and celebrated dancer and

choreographer Jacques d'Amboise (March 23). Says Sheffer, "These conversations will really be heart-to-heart explorations of what creativity is all about and how it has been woven into the life of each of the participants." Get in the know by signing up for the series, \$106 to \$138 (a 20-percent discount off regularly priced tickets).

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Westchester Philharmonic

(914) 682-3707; westchesterphil.org

Be among the first to see the Westchester Philharmonic begin a new era under the baton of Itzhak Perlman, who's been heralded as "one of the greatest classical violinists of our time." The exciting season begins on October 11 and 12, with a weekend of Beethoven featuring piano legend and Kennedy Center honoree Leon Fleisher. Next, you can double your pleasure by seeing Perlman both conducting and playing on November 8 and 9 during an evening of Bach, Mozart, and Brahms. The series continues on December 20 with a winter pops concert featuring Broadway veteran Brian Stokes Mitchell (*Man of La Mancha*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Ragtime*); a spring concert of modern works by Ravel, Adams, Barber, and Stravinsky (April 18 and 19); and the season finale of Mozart, Saint-Saëns, and Tchaikovsky with acclaimed cellist Alisa Weilerstein (May 16 and 17). Don't miss a beat by signing up for a subscription, priced at \$88 to \$268 for four concerts and \$105 to \$315 for five (a 20-percent savings).

FILM SERIES

Academic Arts Theater

Westchester Community College

(914) 606-6262; sunywcc.edu

Many film series are impossible to get subscriptions to, but here's a little secret: you can see some of the most thought-provoking international flicks around by subscribing to Westchester Community College's "Friday Night Film Series." Among the top attractions this fall is *Black Book*, a gripping film by Dutch director Paul Verhoeven that's set in Nazi-occupied Holland (September 12). On the lighter side is *My Best Friend*, an endearing comedy about the underrated topic of male friendship by French director Patrice Leconte (September 19). Bill Costanzo, professor of English and film at the college, says, "What we offer is an alternative to the multiplexes, a uniquely entertaining night out at the movies, where the diverse communities of Westchester can travel around the globe together through the magic of cinema and learn from one another." You save 10 percent with a season subscription (\$48), which includes six films, each with program notes and an introduction and post-screening discussion led by Costanzo.

AUTHOR READINGS

Spoken Interludes

Presented at Trinity Grill & Bar

7 Purdy St, Harrison

(914) 307-1683; spokeninterludes.com

Not only can you hear some of the hottest authors around reading from their latest works, you also can enjoy a buffet dinner, followed by a Q&A session and book signing at this critically acclaimed literary salon, the brainchild of DeLauné Michel, an acclaimed author in her own right. Offered both in Westchester and La, the salon has previously featured such touted writers as Ann Packer, Alice Sebold, Michael Korda, Arianna Huffington, Michael Connelly, and Anita Daimont. Among the literati starting off the East Coast's fall season on October 16 is Amanda Boyden, reading from her new novel, *Babylon Rolling*, which Michel calls "white-hot prose that is poetic and captivating." November and December authors to be announced. Sign up for all three salons for just \$90 (not discounted from individual ticket prices).

ALSO CONSIDER:

ART LECTURES

Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase
(914) 251-6100; neuberger.org

Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah
(914) 232-9555; katonahmuseum.org

MUSIC

Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, Katonah
(914) 232-1252; caramoor.org

Downtown Music at Grace, White Plains
(914) 949-0384; dtmusic.org

The Westchester Chamber Orchestra
(914)654-4926; westchesterchamberorchestra.org

Westchester Jazz Orchestra
At Irvington Town Hall Theater, Irvington
(914) 861-9100; westjazzorch.org

THEATRE

Axial Theatre
At St. John's Episcopal Church, Pleasantville
(914) 286-7680; axialtheatre.org

Blueberry Pond Theatre Ensemble
(914) 923-3530; blueberrypond.org

The Mighty Theater
At Paramount Center for the Arts, Peekskill
(914) 739-2333; mightytheater.com

The Schoolhouse Theater
(914) 277-8477; schoolhousetheater.org

Westchester Broadway Theatre
(914) 592-2222; broadwaytheatre.com

Westco Productions
At Rochambeau School Theater, White Plains
(914) 761-7463; westcoproductions.org

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