

Site Menu

- Home
- Contests
- Email Bulletin
- On Tap CD
- Happy Hour Guide
- Search
- Current Issue
- Past Issues
- Events
- Music
- Message Boards
- Photo Gallery
- On Tap Store
- Special Guides
- Contact Us



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Features

Stay Classy DC: Where the Young Pros Go

written by
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Have you ever wondered what exactly it is that you get for the price of living in our fair town? Surely for a city that is one of the top five most expensive in terms of "cost of living" in the nation we should get some fringe benefits on that investment. Is it the "proximity to power," living amidst the most powerful political city in the world? Unfortunately, the inevitable liability of being killed in a catastrophic terrorist attack takes away any benefit this "power" might create.

In essence, what you and I are paying for is the prestige of living in the most intelligent city in the nation. With this intelligence comes sophistication and great culture. Yet, if you are like me, Einstein, you probably take all of these amazing opportunities for granted. So as we conclude this year and head into the holidays, how about not letting the stress and pressure drive us crazy by taking in one of the many world-class cultural events DC offers.

As I discovered through my own journey into the classier side of DC, experiencing these performances, exhibits or productions is more than just a nice escape from reality for a couple of hours. It is even more than a bush league way of making a female think you have any culture or class simply because you decide to buy a ticket to the opera. It is a way to become part of a talented community of individuals, who through tireless dedication to their crafts deserve our attention and support.



Photo credit: PHOTO COURTESY CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

The Corcoran Gallery of Art

**THE WORLD
OF BEER IN THE
HEART OF
THE CITY**

THE WASHINGTON BALLET

If you ever want to make a ballerina blush, just ask her if she gets upset when a stripper refers to herself as a "dancer." Washington Ballet member Morgan Rose froze for a moment and reluctantly nodded her head "yes" with such hesitation that it seemed she feared retribution from the girls down Wisconsin Avenue at Good Guys. But she further explained.

"As a dancer, and I feel that I can speak for everyone, this is a lifestyle, it's not a job. We put every part of ourselves into it. I started taking ballet at three. You have to work your ass everyday and you have to be on your game at all times."

At 26, Ms. Rose is spending her seventh season with the Washington Ballet. She has been able to travel around the world for her talent, but despite a lifetime with five ballet companies and a degree from the North Carolina School for the Arts, where she returns to instruct on occasion, she admits that the lifestyle is a sacrifice for the sake of perfecting the art.

"Even though our union is wonderful to get us livable wages while we are in season, in the off-season, many of us have to get second jobs teaching or even filing unemployment. But love of ballet keeps us going through."

But a second job wasn't all that bad for this ballerina.

"I did meet my fiancée when I was working a coat check," Ms. Rose explains with a coy smile.

Location/Venue/Tickets/Price: The Washington Ballet is located at 3515 Wisconsin Ave., NW. Some shows are performed at the Warner Theater and the new Harman Center for the Arts. Ticket price ranges from \$30 to \$80. Single tickets can be bought through Ticketmaster.com or at 202-397-7328. For groups of 10 or more, call 202-362-3606 x241.

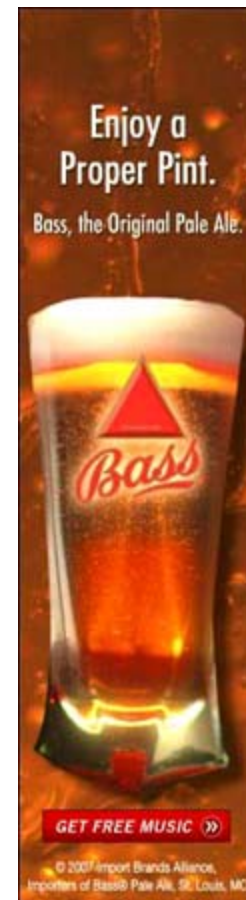
Upcoming Performances: "Septime Webre has taken the 'Nutcracker,' modernized it and based it around Washington DC. It can really get anyone in the holiday spirit," explained Ms. Rose. The Nutcracker will be performed at the Warner Theater, Dec. 6-23.

FYI: The Washington Ballet runs the Jete Society, a group for 21-45 year old supporters of the Ballet. Their most popular event is the "Beer and Ballet" evenings of watching the company rehearse with a few suds. Upcoming "Beer and Ballet" events are to be held on Jan. 23 and April 16. For more information and other Jete Society events, call 202-362-3606 x125 or e-mail, jbristow@washingtonballet.org. Web site: www.washingtonballet.org.

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Before taking in my first symphony, I talked on the phone with NSO Associate Conductor, Emil de Cou. As the NSO's conductor at its Young People concerts and Family Concerts, de Cou realizes that he needs to engage a new generation toward the Symphony.

"I didn't start playing music until I was in high school, and I came from a family that didn't go to



the symphony, ballet or opera," de Cou said. "I am looking to expose as many people as I can to this art-form."

Conducting shows that also include video elements, shorter and more recognizable pieces, de Cou also uses podcasts and the internet to promote classical music,

"I am fighting for an abstract art form in a very literal world," he said. "And part of the problem is that there are those in the symphony community that makes this such a snooty or snobby thing. We shouldn't make people uncomfortable."

His advice for my first symphony: "Use the internet. Find out what is being played and research the pieces before you go. Even listen to a podcast of the piece. It will make the concert so much more enjoyable."

Location/Venue/Tickets/Price: The NSO performs mainly at the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. They also conduct summer concerts at Wolf Trap. Tickets range from \$20 to \$80 and can be bought through the Kennedy Center's Web site.

Upcoming Performances: Marvin Hamlisch guest conducts "The NSO Pops for Happy Holidays!" Dec 16-19. The symphony will perform Handel's Messiah Dec. 20-23. Violin virtuoso, Sara Chang, performs Brahms Jan. 17-19.

FYI: Recently the NSO disbanded their NSOvation group for younger supporters of the symphony for lack of interest. However, they encourage interested individuals to sign up as E-Patrons of the Kennedy Center, where one can be e-mailed \$20 ticket offers. There is also the audience development program, ATTEND, where college students can get tickets for as low as \$10. Web site: www.kennedy-center.org.

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

"I have never been to the opera in the six years I have been here, and I love opera, " proclaimed ballerina Morgan Rose. As I mentioned previously, I wrote this article because I took for granted all of this city's culture, I guess even those in the art scene do exactly the same.

Location/Venue/Tickets/Price: The Washington National Opera performs mainly at the Kennedy Center Opera House as well as other venues in the area. Tickets range from \$50 to \$300 and can be purchased on the WNO's Web site.

Upcoming Performances: The WNO will be performing its first holiday opera "Hansel and Gretel" at the Lincoln Center from Dec. 7 to Dec. 9. These shows are currently sold out. In March and April the Opera is performing "The Flying Dutchman" from March 15 to April 10 and "Rigoletto" from March 29 to April 13.

FYI: The WNO has a program called "Generation O" for those 18-35 and offers discount subscriptions amongst other programs and social events. Web site: <http://dc-opera.org>.

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PRETTY PAINTINGS AND OTHER THINGS TO LOOK AT

In Washington, DC, "art" is first and foremost associated with the **Smithsonian**. Bequeathed by British scientist James Smithson in 1826 (who interestingly enough never actually set foot in America), the Smithsonian Institutions are the cultural heart of the city. With nine art museums, there is something for every type of art lover. A group that takes full advantage of this amazing resource is the Smithsonian's Young Benefactor Group.

Group coordinator Jaclyn Reitman explained, "One special thing about the DC art scene is its diversity. Washington offers its residents a variety of art galleries, art centers, museums, and, of course, the many Smithsonian museums, which provide free access to many of our nation's artistic treasures. The Young Benefactors offer many events that take advantage of this diversity."

Beyond the Smithsonian, the **Corcoran Gallery of Art** also showcases another young benefactor organization, the 1869 Society. Its popular monthly "Cultural Cocktails" attracts the more liberated art lover.

The Corcoran's Megan Sharp further explained Cultural Cocktails: "Cultural Cocktails is the 1869 Society's 'Happy Hour with a Twist.' It is such a great blend of culture and cocktails that it keeps patrons always coming back for more."

Over at **The Phillips**, the museum's Collection Contemporaries was created for 21 to 39 year olds and offers special lectures and events. Or if you prefer not to pay for your art perusing, more than 25 galleries in Dupont Circle conduct open houses from 5 to 8 p.m. the first Friday of every month.

WHERE TO BREAK A LEG IN DC

Its not exactly Broadway, but theater in the nation's capital is world-class. From touring productions to local companies, there is a show almost every night for any taste. From the Bard to the bawdy, classics to contemporary, the following companies exemplify the diversity of theater that extends beyond the Kennedy Center:

Arena Stage — 1101 Sixth St. SW, DC. Performs "Christmas Carol 1941" until Dec. 30. Moving to a temporary facility in in Crystal City. Opening new facility, the Mead Center, in 2010.
www.arenastage.org.

Bethesda Theater — Yes, located in Bethesda, this art deco theater built in 1938 just re-opened its doors in October. "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," playing until Dec. 8. "My Mother's Italian, My Father's Jewish, and I'm in Therapy" opens Fe. 21.
www.bethesdatheater.com.

Folger Theater — 201 East Capitol St., SE, DC. This gorgeous Elizabethan Theatre is located inside the Folger Shakespeare Library. "The Second Shepherds Play" performs from Dec. 12 through Dec. 30. www.folger.edu.

Ford's Theater — 511 10th St. in DC. Hope you have a better experience than President Lincoln had here. Closed for renovation. www.fordstheater.org.

National Theatre — 1321 Pennsylvania Ave., DC. Watch out for those killer bunnies with big pointy teeth. "Monty Python's Spamalot" performs from Dec. 11 to Jan. 6.
www.nationaltheatre.org.

Shakespeare Theatre Company — 450 7th St., NW, DC. Just moved into the gorgeous new Harman Center for the Arts located across the street from the Verizon Center. Performing "Edward II" and "Tamburlaine" until Jan. 6.
www.shakespearetheatre.org.

Signature Theater — Located in Shirlington Village in Arlington, "Glory Days" performs from Jan. 15 to Feb. 17. www.sig-online.org.

The Studio Theatre — 1501 14th St., NW, DC. Celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2008, Studio is performing "Shining City" until Dec. 16 and "Breathe, Boom" until Jan. 6.
www.studiotheatre.org.

Warner Theater — 1299 Pennsylvania Ave., DC. Previously mentioned "Nutcracker" performs here. www.warnertheater.com.

Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company — 641 D. St., NW, DC. DC's most irreverent theater company is also one of its most cutting edge. Check out Club Woolly, the company's group that allows patrons to meet and greet the cast and crew over food and drinks. Charles Ross' popular "One Man Star Wars Trilogy" returns from Dec. 11 to Dec. 30.
www.woollymammoth.net.