

Natural Selections

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Theatre Tips

MELISSA JARMEL

One of the best ways that I know how to take myself out of lab life is to see live theatre, and I'm lucky that New York City offers an overwhelming number of options to do this affordably (though *Hamilton* ticket prices may have you fooled about this).

One of the aspects I love most about going to the theatre is the acute feeling that I am part of a connected community. As an audience member at a live theatre performance, you're part of the experience in a way that is different than watching a movie or reading a book (pastimes I also enjoy and support!) because your attention and energy mix with those around you. This atmosphere affects the performers and the audience's experience, for better or worse. One of my more memorable theatre-going experiences was seeing the final performance of *The Color Purple* revival in 2017. The Clintons arrived. The house shook with applause that never quite died down as each song about the female protagonist, rising above the oppres-

sion of the men in her life, unfolded on stage. Not every theatre experience is as emotionally charged as that one, but they all offer a chance to see life from a different perspective and with a unique group of people. In future posts, I hope to highlight shows I've watched on and off Broadway, but this time I want to give you tips for seeing theatre on a budget.

If you are a full time student, teacher, or faculty member (or other qualifying category), the Theatre Development Fund is your friend — <https://www.tdf.org/nyc/24/Eligibility-Requirements>. For just \$35 a year, you will have access to dozens of theatre experiences in the city, many of them on Broadway. You can purchase tickets in advance for multiple people, and prices range from \$9-49, with only a \$4 processing fee. *Hamilton* and *Wicked* won't show up through this service, but popular shows like *Carousel* and *Hello Dolly* have. You don't find out where your seats are until you arrive at the theatre, but I've often lucked out with orchestra seats! Seeing Broadway on a budget is rarely going to get better than this.

Lotteries also offer a way to see a

Broadway show inexpensively, but of course, you shouldn't rely on winning to have plans to see theatre that night. Some shows like *Mean Girls*, *Book of Mormon*, and *Once On This Island* offer in person lotteries every day that are usually drawn two hours before the performance. In the last couple of years, many shows have begun to offer digital lottery options. Broadway Direct (<https://lottery.broadwaydirect.com/>) offers digital lotteries for *Lion King*, *Aladdin*, *Spongebob*, and *Summer*. The TodayTix app (<https://www.todaytix.com/>) currently offers the digital lottery for the Harry Potter play on Broadway. Also, shows such as *Hamilton* (<https://hamiltonmusical.com/lottery/>), *Dear Evan Hansen* (<https://dearevanhansenlottery.com/>), and *Book of Mormon* (<https://www.luckyseat.com/book-of-mormon/>) offer their own digital lotteries on dedicated websites.

If you have patience, rush tickets are also a wonderful budget-friendly option. Some shows restrict their rush policies by age or student status, but many are open

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for the general public. Rush tickets are sold when the box office opens (typically 10am Tuesday-Saturday and noon on Sundays), but you'll want to get in line at least a couple hours before to better your odds. Each show has discretion for how many rush tickets they will sell on a given day, but you can usually count on around twenty tickets sold at the rush price. If you're one of the first ten people on line, your chances are pretty good. Some shows have also started offering a digital rush in the TodayTix app as well, including shows at The Public Theater (<https://www.public-theater.org/>).

Speaking of which, don't overlook seeing shows Off-Broadway! The houses are smaller so the shows are more intimate and the tickets are often more affordable. Student discounts or age-related discounts are also usually available if you ask the box office. I'd recommend checking out The Public (<https://www.publictheater.org/>), 2nd Stage (<https://2st.com/>), New World Stages (<https://newworldstages.com/>), Classic Stage Company (<https://www.classicstage.org/>), and the Atlantic Theatre Company (<https://atlantictheater.org/>) for starters.

atlantictheater.org/) for starters.

There are also four TKTS booths around the city (<https://www.tdf.org/nyc/7/TKTS-ticket-booths>) that offer same day Broadway and Off-Broadway tickets at a discount. The seats are usually in the orchestra section, so you might still be paying more than \$50 for a ticket, but your view will be great and it's still cheaper than buying from the box office. The TodayTix app sometimes offers tickets for a discount compared to the box office, but not all the time so be sure to double-check!

This isn't an exhaustive list of budget-friendly ways to see theatre in the city, but it should be plenty to get you started! Always get in touch with the show's box office for the most accurate information on rush or lottery policies. And here's a website that keeps up with the rush and lottery options for Broadway shows (<http://www.broadwayforbroke-people.com/>).

Remember to be kind to the audience members around you by turning off your phones, unwrapping your candies, and keeping fidgeting and talking to a minimum during the performance. And of course, enjoy the show!

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Natural Expressions Ascensus Volume VII Launch Event

Ascensus: The WCM Journal of Humanities will be hosting a launch party and exhibition for volume VII of their publication this month. *Ascensus* is a student-led organization that promotes the humanities by collecting and publishing works from members of the Tri-Institutional community.

The launch event will feature select pieces from the upcoming publication and short performances.

Date: September 11, 2018

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Location: Weill Greenberg Center, 1305 York Avenue, 2nd floor (rooms A/B)

Admission: Free

Email Megan E. Kelley at mkelley@rockefeller.edu to submit your art, music, performance, sporting, or other event for next month's Natural Expressions bulletin.

Culture Corner

Visiting Michelangelo's Sculptures in Florence

BERNIE LANGS

One of my personal goals during a late May 2018 visit to Florence, Italy was to view as many sculptures by Michelangelo as possible. Here is a rundown of my thoughts on some of the works that I saw.



Photos by Bernie Langs

The Deposition at the Museo dell'Opera del Duomo and *Palestrina Pietà* at Galleria dell'Accademia

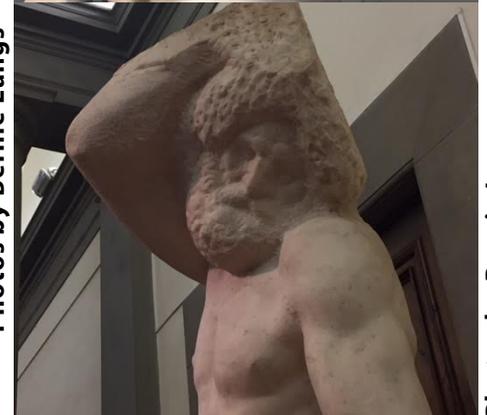
These two sorrowful sculptures are very much akin. *The Deposition* was created by Michelangelo originally for his own tomb and it is generally agreed that the hooded figure of Nicodemus carrying the body of the dead Christ is a self-portrait of the artist. It is a moving, emotionally strong work of art reflecting the deep-rooted inner pain suffered by Michelangelo. The sculpture seemingly begs to be read as a statement of profound religious ideals, but it can also be read as a harsh metaphor for mankind's turmoiled existence. The *Palestrina Pietà* is another study in grief, also depicting Christ in the moments after his death, this time supported by two figures, the one to his side most likely his mother, Mary. This sculpture is now attributed to Michelangelo, though may be a work he started that was later completed by another hand.



Museo nazionale del Bargello: *Brutus*, *Bacchus*, and *Madonna* ("Tondo Pitti"):

Brutus is a fantastic marble bust depicting Julius Caesar's infamous assassin. Although Dante placed the ancient Roman far down in the depths of Hell, Michelangelo's work leans towards Brutus' heroic nature, mirroring the Florentine movement of Republicanism against the notion of tyranny, a perspective current to the artist's sphere. While many sculpted busts from the Renaissance, ancient Greece, and Imperial Rome illicit only an appreciative glance when I visit museums, the rough texture, turned head, and other

features of *Brutus* compelled my extended meditation. Based on photos I've viewed in art history books, I had concerns about seeing *Bacchus* face-to-face, in the God of Wine's all-too-very naked flesh. I found the inebriated young man easier to view in person than in printed reproductions. At the Bargello, I was also delighted to encounter the gracefully sculpted *Madonna* (known as "Tondo Pitti"). It is one of the Master's emergent marble bas-reliefs and a study in nuance, poise, and gentle religious rendering. The sculpture is breathtaking in its simplicity and the stone's ethereal color.



Galleria dell'Accademia: *David* and *The Bearded Slave*

The big enchilada of Michelangelo's achievements and one of the most referenced works in all of art history, *David*, does not disappoint when encountered in a museum setting. The Master's creation is enormous in size and impossibly carved with a polished gleam. The youthful figure liberated by the artist from a block of

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marble into the absolutely stunning, striking image of the Biblical hero makes for an awe-inspiring personal encounter. While I found many other sculptures by Michelangelo more engaging on emotional and philosophical levels, *David's* undeniable beauty is quite enough for any viewer to experience joy in its presence. The Accademia lines the approach to *David* with several unfinished pieces that are grouped together under the heading of *non-finito*. The works garner less attention from many tourists than the colossal *David* at the end of the passageway. These odd, yet beautiful “slaves” or “prisoners” in varying twisted or turned poses offer great insight into Michelangelo’s working process and showcase the tragic aspect in the forefront of many of his late works.



Casa Buonarroti: *Madonna of the Steps* and *Battle of the Centaurs* (detail)



Palazzo Vecchio: *Genius of Victory*

I chanced upon Michelangelo’s *Genius of Victory* while roaming through the huge chamber of the Palazzo Vecchio’s *Salone dei Cinquecento*. One walks in the majestic space gazing at enormous military and battle frescos. It was beneath one of these paintings that this sculpture by Michelangelo drew my attention. This great work of art is made even greater because of where it is situated. Nestled along a wall below the massive, colorful frescoes, it is strategically placed in the company of several other monumental statues, including Vincenzo de’ Rossi’s *Labors of Hercules*. The Palazzo Vecchio was also the site where Michelangelo planned to paint and Leonardo da Vinci toiled unsuccessfully with “dueling” frescos that are now lost to history. *David* was also originally displayed in the outside courtyard of the Palazzo.



Museo delle Cappelle Medicee: *Tomb of Giuliano di Lorenzo de’ Medici* with *Night* and *Day* and *Tomb of Lorenzo di Piero de’ Medici* with *Dusk* and *Dawn*

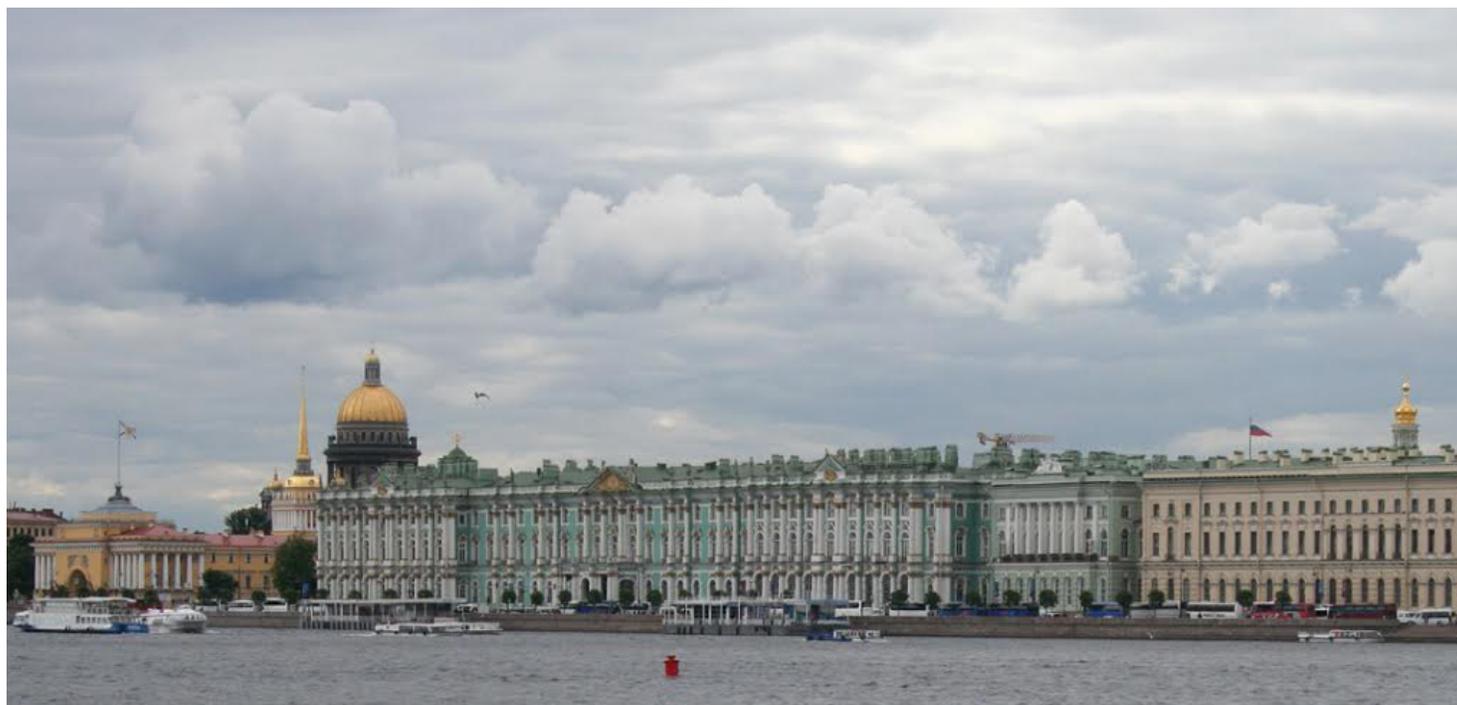
On my final day in Florence, after seeing hundreds of paintings, sculptures, and architectural wonders of the bejeweled city on the river Arno, my very last stop was at the Medici Chapel, where I stood with a handful of visitors to take in the sight of two tombs designed and executed in marble by Michelangelo. One set of sculptures depicts Giuliano, Duke of Nemours (and a brother of Pope Leo X) flanked by reclining statues of *Day*, in the guise of a strapping man, and *Night*, depicted as a sleeping woman. The other is the tomb of the Duke of Urbino, Leo’s nephew. The Duke’s pose is thoughtful and pensive as he sits with *Dawn* on his right and *Dusk* on his left. All of the figures in the room led me to a state of bewildered, confused meditation. The gestures and bodily postures of both deceased men, as well as their distant facial expressions, led me into serious thought and an odd, quiet sadness. They came across as holding an internal, desperate gravitas, tinged with the mournful aspect one finds in ancient Greek and Roman funerary steles and sculptures. The four reclining mythological figures appeared in my mind’s eye as a mirror of the deepest religious, spiritual, and philosophical state that embodied the soul and genius of Michelangelo. These figures are beyond allegory. I stood in the Chapel for a very long time, dumbfounded and amazed that an artist’s inner being could reach so profoundly and harshly into such deep and dark territories unknown in his time – and to this very day.

Photo by Bernie Langs

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Life on a Roll ***The Venice of the North***

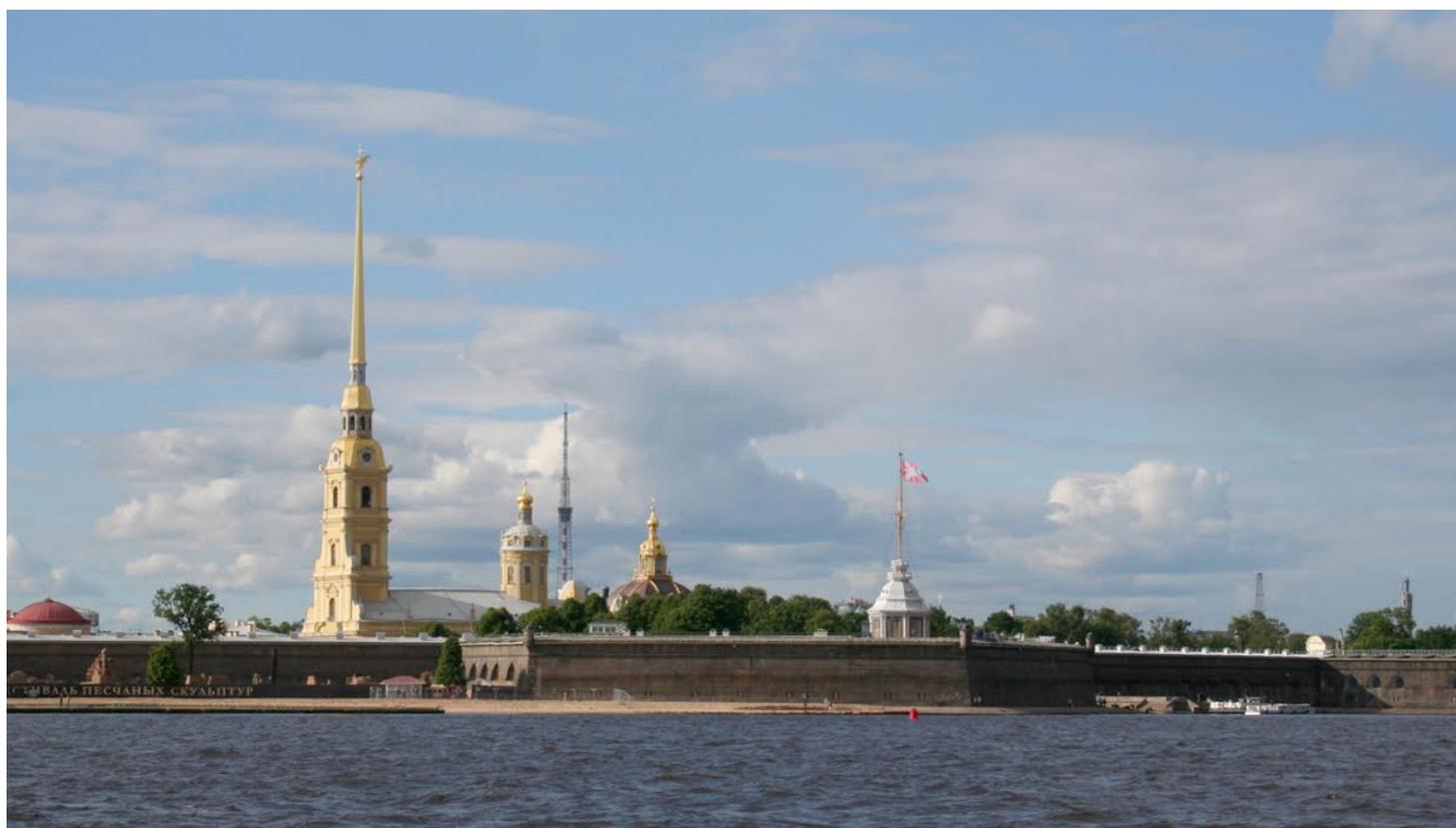
ELODIE PAUWELS

Visit Elodie's photoblog:
<https://elodiephoto.wordpress.com/>

So many Venices in the World! Before booking my trip to Russia, I had no clue that Peter the Great wanted the city he founded, Saint Petersburg, to look like Venice, Italy.

During the never-ending summer days, discover this colorful city with dozens of palaces along ca-

nals and the large Neva River. Lose yourself in the Hermitage Museum and its famous green Winter Palace. And catch up on the Romanov dynasty while visiting Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in the middle of the fortress, the very place the city was founded in 1703!



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