

39 must-see performances, exhibitions, and arts events in New England: The lowdown from the Globe's arts writers on the new season's most eagerly anticipated performances, shows, and exhibitions across the region.

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FULL TEXT DANCE

By Karen Campbell

Batsheva Dance Company

The wildly acclaimed Tel Aviv troupe led by visionary choreographer Ohad Naharin makes its long-awaited local debut at the Boch Center Shubert Theatre. (Naharin is known for developing the Gaga dance-training framework.) The company brings Naharin's new *Venezuela*, an evening-length work set to a wide-ranging score incorporating Gregorian chant, tango, and rap, and explores the relationship between movement and context.

> April 5-6, 265 Tremont Street, Boston, 866-348-9738, celebrityseries.org

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's annual appearance is a rite of spring in Boston. Its series of mixed repertory programs at the Boch Center Wang Theatre includes Rennie Harris's new hour-long tribute to the life and times of the groundbreaking Ailey. *Lazarus* examines racial inequities when Ailey founded the company, in 1958, and now.

> May 2-5, 270 Tremont Street, Boston, 800-982-2787, bochcenter.org

The Yard

This 46-year-old organization fosters a wide range of choreographic creativity and provides Martha's Vineyard residents and visitors with a first-rate summer performance season. Highlights include returning favorites Malpaso Dance Company of Cuba and Ronald K. Brown/*Evidence*, as well as a strong slate of cutting-edge indie artists, such as Brazilian tap dancer Leonardo Sandoval and New York experimentalists Joanna Kotze and Kimberly Bartosik.

> May 27-September 1, various locations on Martha's Vineyard, 508-645-9662, dancetheyard.org

Free! —Dance for World Community

The 11th annual event, capped off with a block party just outside Harvard Square, is the culmination of a week of activities celebrating all things dance. More than 90 dance troupes perform on one indoor and four outdoor stages and offer mini-classes, with styles ranging from ballet and contemporary to hip-hop and international. Local nonprofits on site help raise awareness of social and environmental issues.

> June 8, Massachusetts Avenue between Bow and Remington streets, Cambridge, 617-354-7467, danceforworldcommunity.org

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

World-class dance from around the globe, free performances by up-and-coming artists, scholar talks, exhibits, special events —for dance lovers, it doesn't get much better than this internationally renowned festival in the pastoral Berkshire Hills. Highlights this summer include the world premiere of *The Day* (Wendy Whelan, Lucinda Childs, Maya Beiser) and Urban Bush Women's John Coltrane-inspired *Walking With 'Trane*.

> June 19-August 25, 358 George Carter Road, Becket, 413-243-0745, jacobsillow.org

THEATER

By Don Aucoin

The Song of Summer

A pop singer who is seemingly on top of the world, with a hit tune that's playing all over the radio, abruptly quits his concert tour and journeys hundreds of miles to his hometown. At the dwelling of his childhood piano teacher, he makes a discovery that could transform his life and career. Taibi Magar directs the world premiere of the play, by the inventive Lauren Yee, at the Trinity Repertory Company.

> *March 14-April 14, 201 Washington Street, Providence, 401-351-4242, trinityrep.com*

School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play

High school girls—including the queen bee of their clique—are readying to compete for the title of Miss Ghana of 1986 when into their midst comes a light-skinned American student. The newcomer's presence sets in motion a story that grapples with issues of colorism and internalized racism. Summer L. Williams directs the SpeakEasy Stage Company production of Jocelyn Bioh's play at the Calderwood Pavilion at the Boston Center for the Arts.

> *May 3-25, 527 Tremont Street, Boston, 617-933-8600, speakeasystage.com*

The Waverly Gallery

Tina Packer takes the helm for Kenneth Lonergan's quietly wrenching memory play about a family struggling to cope when its matriarch, the longtime operator of an art gallery in Greenwich Village (played by the gifted Annette Miller), begins to succumb to Alzheimer's disease. The Shakespeare & Company production at the Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre features Elizabeth Aspenlieder as the matriarch's daughter.

> *May 23-July 14, 70 Kemble Street, Lenox, 413-637-3353, shakespeare.org*

Because of Winn Dixie

A musical adaptation of Kate DiCamillo's Newbery-winning children's novel about a young girl named Opal and the dog who opens up her world, inspiring Opal to make friends in her new Florida town, draw closer to her preacher father, and learn important facts about her absent mother. The Goodspeed Musicals production, at the Goodspeed Opera House, is directed by John Rando, with book and lyrics by Nell Benjamin (*Mean Girls, Legally Blonde*) and music by Duncan Sheik (*Spring Awakening*).

> *June 28-September 1, 6 Main Street, East Haddam, Connecticut, 860-873-8668, goodspeed.org*

Dear Evan Hansen

Young audiences and Tony Award voters alike fervently embraced this heart-tugging musical about a lonely, insecure teenager whose popularity mushrooms after he is drawn into an act of deception that spirals way beyond his control, thanks to social media. With songs like "Waving Through a Window" and "You Will Be Found" (by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, who won an Academy Award for "City of Stars," from *La La Land*), the original Broadway cast album cracked the top 10 on the Billboard charts. Tickets for the Boston Opera House run go on sale March 24.

> *July 10-August 4, 539 Washington Street, Boston, 800-982-2787, broadwayinboston.com*

Free! —Cymbeline

Fred Sullivan Jr., whose bravura portrayals have enlivened numerous free Shakespeare on the Common productions, turns director to tackle one of the Bard's seldom-performed plays. After Imogen, daughter of British monarch Cymbeline, marries the commoner Posthumus, a furious Cymbeline banishes him. Then the exile is bamboozled into believing Imogen has been unfaithful to him—just part of the welter of schemes, counterschemes, deceptions, disguises, and palace intrigue in the play, a Commonwealth Shakespeare Company production.

> *July 17-August 4, Boston Common, 617-426-0863, commshakes.org*

FILM

By Peter Keough

Free! —Emerson Film Festival

You might glimpse a future Paul Thomas Anderson or Norman Lear (Emerson College dropout and class of 1944, respectively) at the 19th Emerson Film Festival. Could it be Fode Busia and Alex Weingarten with their absurdist

Nektarinky? Or Georden West and her sensuous Patron Saint? In all, 15 student shorts compete for prizes at this free event.

> *March 24, noon and 2 p.m., 559 Washington Street, Boston, 617-824-3805, web.emerson.edu/brightlights
Nantucket Film Festival*

Screenwriters get their due on this quaint and tony island, where every year awards are presented to worthies such as 2018 honorees Noah Baumbach and documentarian Morgan Neville. The event delivers great films, workshops, panel discussions, and hobnobbing with guests like Greta Gerwig, Adam Driver, and Ben Stiller.

> *June 19-24, various locations on Nantucket, 646-480-1900, nantucketfilmfestival.org*

Free! —NewportFILM Outdoors

You don't have to be a millionaire to recline on the lawn of a Newport mansion, watch an outstanding new documentary, and participate in a Q&A with the filmmaker. Previous offerings include Morgan Neville's *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* and Matt Tynauer's *Studio 54*. It's all free, though the popcorn will cost you.

> *Thursdays, June 20-September 5, various locations, Newport, Rhode Island, 401-649-2784, newportfilm.com
22nd Annual Maine International Film Festival*

Learn from my mistake: Last year the festival gave its lifetime achievement award to one of my favorite actresses, Dominique Sanda, and screened Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Conformist* (1970), in which she stars —and I missed it. This year's winner has not been announced, nor has the schedule; last year's included *I Am Not a Witch*, *Madeline's Madeline*, and Andrei Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev* (1966).

> *July 12-21, various locations in Waterville, Maine, 207-861-8138, miff.org*

28th Annual Woods Hole Film Festival

Founder Judy Laster has said she wants her festival to be an "East Coast version of Sundance," and though Woods Hole doesn't have the mountains or Robert Redford, it does have small-town intimacy and an eclectic selection of independent films. It scheduled more than 50 features in 2018, including the powerful documentary *Say Her Name: The Life and Death of Sandra Bland*.

> *July 27-August 3, various locations in Woods Hole, 508-495-3456, woodsholefilmfestival.org*

23rd Annual Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival

Premiering his film in 2017 at this Oscar-qualifying festival proved good luck for *Chris Overton: The Silent Child* went on to win the Academy Award for Best Live Action Short. In its last go-round, the RIIF presented 295 features and shorts from 48 countries and hosted more than 300 filmmakers.

> *August 6-11, various locations in Providence, Warwick, Newport, East Greenwich, Bristol, and Woonsocket, Rhode Island, 401-861-4445, film-festival.org*

CLASSICAL MUSIC

By Zoe Madonna

Boston Early Music Festival

The city's biennial early music extravaganza includes lectures, dance workshops, master classes, and more concerts than you can shake a cornetto at. A grand production of Agostino Steffani's opera *Orlando* —the North American premiere —plays the Emerson Cutler Majestic Theatre four times during the festival.

> *June 9-16, various locations in Boston, 617-661-1812, bemf.org*

Free! —Summer Institute for Contemporary Performance Practice

The free festival of contemporary music known as "Sick Puppy" (the acronym is SICPP) schedules daily free concerts and pulls in graduate-school-level musicians and singers for master classes and workshops. On the docket: artists including Boston's Callithumpian Consort, double bassist/composer Mark Dresser, and the Piano and Erhu Project; expect to hear many works by composer-in-residence Michael Finnissy. The festival, at the New England Conservatory of Music, culminates in the marathon "Iditarod" concert, which starts in the afternoon and often goes till the wee hours.

> *June 14-22, 30 Gainsborough Street, Boston, sicpp.org*

Rockport Chamber Music Festival

Barry Shiffman's second year as artistic director kicks off with a Roaring Twenties-inspired program and ties up as he joins conductorless string orchestra A Far Cry and violinist Chee-Yun Kim onstage for Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante*. This year's theme is "Source and Inspiration"; standouts include performances by the Aizuri Quartet, Takacs Quartet, and JCT Trio; a Venice Baroque Orchestra program with mandolinist Avi Avital; and inventive themed concerts by the Art of Time Ensemble.

> June 14-July 14, August 17 and 31, Shalin Liu Performance Center, 37 Main Street, Rockport, 978-546-7391, rockportmusic.org

Tanglewood

The summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra offers music all season. Take in a spectacular symphony, concerto, or opera at the Shed, enjoy a recital by one of the world's foremost soloists or chamber groups in intimate Ozawa Hall, or hear the rising generation of musicians from the Tanglewood Music Center and Boston University Tanglewood Institute. Opening in 2019 is the Linde Center for Music and Learning, home to the Tanglewood Learning Institute, which will offer cultural activities galore throughout the summer and beyond.

> June 15-August 31, 297 West Street, Lenox, 617-266-1492, bso.org

Antenna Cloud Farm

The programming and dates for this adventurous festival's second year aren't locked down, but the details so far are tantalizing. The unifying factor of the featured artists, writes director Michi Wiancko, is that "they are innovators in their fields . . . creating something unique to even their own genres and musical categories." The slate includes dynamic chamber artists PROJECT Trio and NOW Ensemble. Outdoor concerts are timed to coincide with sunset.

> Late July to mid-October, Gill, antennacloudfarm.com

VISUAL ARTS

By Murray Whyte

Free! —Theaster Gates: Facsimile Cabinet of Women Origin Stories

Theaster Gates stayed close to his Chicago roots in creating this exhibition, at the Colby College Museum of Art. The artist-academic-activist culled some 3,000 images from the Johnson Publishing Archive, the records of the Chicago publisher whose *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines became pillars of black American culture beginning in the 1940s. (A sizable chunk of the material is now in the care of the Rebuild Foundation, the community arts organization Gates founded.) The show embodies Gates's interest in the publisher's critical role in crafting black identity through the tumult of civil rights and beyond.

> March 12-September 8, 5600 Mayflower Hill, Waterville, Maine, 207-859-5600, colby.edu/museum

deCordova New England Biennial

New England institutions are long —very, very long —on historical art and relatively short on its contemporary iterations, but the deCordova Biennial arrives every two years as an up-to-the-minute survey of what's happening right here and now. Some 23 artists put on plain view the dynamic scene to be found in the region. One thing to note is the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum's commitment: It gives over its entire building and rambling outdoor campus to the exhibition, as well as its summer prime-time slot.

> April 5-September 19, 51 Sandy Pond Road, Lincoln, 781-259-8355, decordova.org.

Suffering From Realness

It's the rare art museum exhibition that takes its title from a Kanye West/Jay-Z lyric, but the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art is a rare institution. The show takes on "the politics of representation," of particular relevance in these trying times. Look for recent MacArthur "genius grant" fellow Titus Kaphar to be front and center with his works that reimagine American great-man myths from an African-American point of view.

> April 13-January 2020, 1040 Mass MoCA Way, North Adams, 413-662-2111, massmoca.org

John Akomfrah: Purple

John Akomfrah's 2015 three-channel video installation *The Unfinished Conversation*, an immersive tableau of image and sound loosely about racial tension in the aftermath of British colonialism, set the bar —at least for me —for the power of the form. His newest work, at the ICA Watershed, promises to have the same poetic touch with the current

flash point of migration, set against a planet in turmoil.

> *May 26-September 2, Boston Harbor Shipyard and Marina, 256 Marginal Street, East Boston, 617-478-3100, icaboston.org*

Renoir: The Body, the Senses

Naked bodies by one of the marquee French Impressionists surely sounds like a summer blockbuster to me, and the Clark Art Institute stands ready to deliver. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, one of the movement's leading lights, was a radical sensualist, whether painting still lifes or landscapes with a typically luminous palette. Turning to the human form, he brought his fascination with the sensual away from the transcendent and into the realm of the human scale.

> *June 8-September 22, 225 South Street, Williamstown, 413-458-2303, clarkart.edu*

Jackson Pollock's Mural

The biggest piece ever made by the foundational abstract expressionist —20 feet wide and 8 feet high —Pollock's mural marked the artist's turn away from surrealist abstraction and toward the rough, gestural action painting that would become his signature. Commissioned by Peggy Guggenheim for the grand entrance of her Manhattan home, it's been in the permanent collection of the University of Iowa Museum of Art, to whom Guggenheim donated it, since 1951. Its arrival at the Museum of Fine Arts marks one of the final stops on an international sojourn before it returns to its Midwestern home, unlikely to travel again for years.

> *July 1-February 23, 2020, 465 Huntington Avenue, Boston, 617-267-9300, mfa.org*

POP MUSIC

By Michael Andor Brodeur

Big Boi's Dungeon Family Tour 2019

One of the other reasons to tune in to last month's big game was to catch a performance by another MVP: Big Boi, half of the legendary hip-hop duo OutKast. Big Boi recently purchased the home where the group first tracked its groundbreaking 1994 debut, *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*, in the basement recording studio (a.k.a. the Dungeon). Twenty-five years later, he plays the House of Blues on his Dungeon Family Tour —which reunites Goodie Mob, Organized Noize, and KP the Great —and shows just how deep those Southern rap roots run.

> *April 25, 15 Lansdowne Street, Boston, 888-693-2583, houseofblues.com/boston*

Cher

Cher recently took what appears to be a detour into experimental poetry on Twitter, but rest assured, she is still Cher. Which means the chameleonic icon is also still putting on stage shows of nearly weapons-grade fabulousness. And her Here We Go Again Tour will be no exception: an extravaganza eleganza that stomps through a half-century of hits (from "The Beat Goes On" to "Woman's World"), plus plenty of covers (it's Cher), and more than a splash of ancient Rome for flavor. (What can I say? The queen knows her kingdom.) If I could turn back time, the TD Garden date wouldn't be sold out, but pricey resale tickets are out there —if you believe in life after Ticketmaster.

> *April 28, 100 Legends Way, Boston, 617-624-1000, tdgarden.com*

Boston Calling

Unlike most 10-year-olds, Boston Calling just seems to keep getting more likeable. The nimble festival is growing comfortable in its newish digs at the Harvard Athletic Complex and getting even more ambitious with its mix of music, comedy, food, and interactive programming. Topping the daily lineups are Twenty One Pilots, Tame Impala, and Travis Scott, but make a weekend of it for performances from Janelle Monae, Black Star, Yaeji, Princess Nokia, Brandi Carlile, and locals like Guster and Pile.

> *May 24-26, 65 North Harvard Street, Allston, bostoncalling.com*

New Kids on the Block

If you're waiting for another luxury cruise with New Kids on the Block, that ship isn't sailing until spring 2020. To tide over the Blockheads (their term, not mine), Boston's most beloved adult boy band drops a 30th-anniversary reissue edition of *Hangin' Tough* in March and hits the road (presumably in a DeLorean) for the MixTape Tour, which comes

to the TD Garden. It also features Salt-N-Pepa, Tiffany, Debbie Gibson, Naughty by Nature, and probably a bunch of people you went to high school with and didn't expect to see in those same overalls.

> June 28-29, 100 Legends Way, Boston, 617-624-1000, tdgarden.com

Solid Sound 2019

Jeff Tweedy's enduring biennial exploration of the outer orbits of his musical tastes reconvenes for another delightfully weird weekend at Mass MoCA. In the past, Solid Sound has swirled together everything from Wilco-adjacent indie rock to fragile folk and thumping DJ sets to rare performances from luminaries of avant-garde jazz and experimental rock. The massive galleries give the experience an added dimension: an immersive light installation from James Turrell makes a Coachella hologram look like . . . well, a Coachella hologram.

> June 28-30, 1040 Mass MoCA Way, North Adams, solidsoundfestival.com

Free! —Lowell Folk Festival

This globally minded music festival in the heart of Lowell fills five stages for three days, and this year's 33d installment is likely to carry forth the free event's proud tradition of exploding traditions —like what counts as “folk.” Last year's weekend welcomed artists from Mali, Colombia, Spain, France, Cape Verde, Georgia (the other one), and every corner of the United States. Bring a blanket, open ears, and some friends.

> July 26-28, various locations in downtown Lowell, 978-275-1764, lowellfolkfestival.org

BOOKS

By Amy Sutherland

Free! —ProvidenceAthenæum

The Providence Athenæum has much to recommend it, from the handsome 19th-century interior to the historic collection (Edgar Allan Poe's signature appears in the 1848 lending register) to hosting a busy calendar of free events and readings. Best-selling novelist Meg Wolitzer reads at the nearby First Unitarian Church on March 22 at 6 p.m., and National Book Award winner Terrance Hayes joins Rhode Island's poet laureate, Tina Cane, on April 25 at 5 p.m.

> 251 Benefit Street, Providence, 401-421-6970, providenceathenaeum.org

The Music Hall

This jewel of a space runs two fantastic year-round literary series. Writers on a New England Stage imports big names such as Pulitzer-winning author Jared Diamond (May 9 at 7 and 9 p.m.). Writers in the Loft is a more intimate experience in a small black-box theater. Tickets include a book and a drink. Sci-fi master Neal Stephenson appears on June 14 at 7 p.m.

> 28 Chestnut Street, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 603-436-2400, themusichall.org

Free! —Lit Crawl Boston

Literature can get a little too serious sometimes, but not at this irreverent evening event that extends up and down Newbury Street. Sure, it includes readings —but in bars, some with free beer and wine. You can also expect trivia contests, improv performances, games, and concerts. This moving literary fest costs nothing, unless you start buying books.

> June 6, various locations on Newbury Street, Boston, 857-259-6999, bostonbookfest.org

Free! —Bookstock Literary Festival

A small army —some 40 strong —of authors, poets, and artists annually converges on quaint old Woodstock for a weekend of all things books. In addition to readings, expect new and used book sales on the town green, a poetry jam, an exhibition of book art, and (one of the few events that isn't free) a literary brunch.

> July 26-28, various locations in Woodstock, Vermont, 802-989-4338, bookstockvt.org

Free! —Martha's Vineyard Book Festival

Odd years are lucky ones for bibliophiles on the Vineyard. That's when this biennial book festival packed with big names sets up camp on the island. So far, megastar John Grisham and 2018 National Book Award for fiction winner Sigrid Nunez have signed on for this year's edition. Expect more big names. Events other than the opening-night

panel are free.

> August 3-4, various locations around Martha's Vineyard, mvbookfestival.com

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Caption:

Big Boi brings his Dungeon Family Tour 2019 to the House of Blues on April 25.

Brian Ziff

DETAILS

Subject:	Writers; Art galleries & museums; Artists; Book awards; Dance; Book fairs; Girls; Opera houses; Theater; Summer; Motion picture festivals; Alzheimers disease
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