

Buoyed by New Hope Villagers Rally Again to Save Landmarked Rec Center

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS



NEARLY 100 PROTESTERS RALLIED OUTSIDE THE SHUTTERED Tony Dapolito Recreation Center to light a fire under city officials. Photo courtesy of Sommer Omar.

On a recent windy weekday, nearly 100 protesters rallied outside the shuttered Tony Dapolito Recreation Center to light a fire under city officials. Buoyed by recent events, they demanded the city save the beloved building on Clarkson and Carmine streets, long a major city hub for youth and community activities.

The nearly 120-year-old center has been closed since 2019. In 2024, the city casually noted plans to demolish it, despite the

building's protected landmarked status and despite the city not having alerted the community board to its plans.

The city claimed the center was too damaged to repair, sparking vehement community opposition, including the launch of the Coalition to Save the Public Recreation Center Downtown or SPRCD, pronounced "sparked." It is made up of more than 25 community organizations, nonprofits, block associations and political clubs.

SPRCD held a major rally in June. And now suddenly, there's hope. As SPRCD organizer Sommer Omar told the boisterous October 8 crowd, so much has changed for the better since June.

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

First, the Parks Department "has confirmed that \$120 million in capital funding has... been allocated to this site...funding that the

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CHARACTERS OF THE VILLAGE

Andrew Berman, Preservationist and Activist

BY BRIAN AND JOY PAPE

Anyone living or working in lower Manhattan has probably heard of Andrew Berman. He has been the face and voice of historic preservation in Greenwich Village and beyond since 2002, when he became executive director of the Village Preservation organization.

Although Greenwich Village has a long history of preservationists working to save the special character of the Village, such as Jane Jacobs and friends, it wasn't until 1980 that Regina Kellerman and others formed the Greenwich Village Trust for Historic Preservation (perhaps to match the National Trust moniker). While sharing the Salma-gundi Art Club mansion at 47 Fifth Avenue, Kellerman became the first executive director in 1982, and in 1984 made a slight name change to Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. Since 1999, it has occupied the former rectory of St. Mark's in the Bowery Church at 232 East 11th Street, and rebranded in 2019 as Village Preservation (online at villagepreservation.org).

Here's our interview with Berman.

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ANDREW BERMAN has been the executive director of Village Preservation since 2002. Credit: Village Preservation.

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city council has already approved...that is already finalized in the city’s capital budget.” This is money allocated years ago and never used, as the city arguably pursued “demolition by neglect” by deliberately failing to begin repairs.

Second, Eric Adams—“one of the main drivers behind the demolition plan”—has dropped out of the mayoral race.

And last but not least, the leading mayoral contender, Democratic nominee Zohran Mamdani, has publicly promised to repair the rec center if elected. So too has his Republican opponent Curtis Sliwa. (Independent candidate Andrew Cuomo had yet to take a position at press time.)

In a September 18 town hall at Saint Mark’s Church, Mamdani responded to a question about the broken promise to repair the center by acknowledging the relentless “betrayals” still faced by working people and others who continue to confront the failed promises of city government. He asked, how can people “continue to believe in democracy if that is their experience?”

He then committed to repair the center, noting, “It’s quite clear to me that the important thing to do here is not just to fulfill the promises you have made but also do your best to fulfill the promises that have been made prior to you.”

Noting that politicians “campaign in poetry but then govern in prose,” Omar urged the rally audience to “keep showing up” to



THE INDOOR POOL at Tony Dapolito Recreation Center. *Photo credit: NYC Parks Department.*

keep the pressure on.

She also observed that City Council Member Erik Bottcher, who has not opposed demolition, has nevertheless recently called on the Parks Department to come up with a plan that is more responsive to the community.

TIME FOR A RESET

Village Preservation Executive Director Andrew Berman was cheered by the crowd as he credited the “months and months and months of writing and showing up and protesting and rallying so that we could get to the point where the architect of the destruc-

tion of Tony Dapolito Center is no longer running for mayor.”

“It’s time for a reset,” he declared, noting how frequently elected leaders have betrayed the community. “We trusted five years ago when they closed the center and said, ‘we’re gonna make repairs and reopen it,’ that that’s what they would do. We trusted when they allocated \$120 million for repairing the building that that’s what it would be used for, not for demolition.”

He continued, “But that’s not what’s happened. In fact, if we left them to their own devices, this building would be rubble. All

because of a dream that the mayor had of some grand aquatic center he wants to build on this site, which nobody’s asking for.”

Berman also slammed city officials for claiming the building was beyond repair. “They say ‘the building’s old, and it needs repairs. We can’t repair old buildings.’ I mean, come on. If our city government is incapable of repairing an old building, what are they capable of?”

He continued, “One thing they are capable of is hypocrisy because the people who say that all work in city buildings like City Hall and the Parks Department headquarters [the Arsenal in Central Park] that are older than this, that needed more repairs than this...and that are now spanking new with their glorious fancy new offices...where they go to work every day.”

Local Democratic District Leader Mar Fitzgerald called the building “a powerhouse. Its bones are strong, its walls are filled with our history, and its purpose is still alive. Restoring it is visionary.” She called on Villagers to but-tonhole elected officials “every damn time you see them” to insist on restoration and repair.

Community activists Francisco Gonzalez and Nick Caballero also addressed the rally. Cabellero, a Chelsea resident and former Parks Department employee, reminded the crowd that the center had been both a mon-eymaker for the city and crucial to young people across the boroughs, as it had once hosted a citywide association of 82 basket-ball leagues.



VILLAGE PRESERVATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Andrew Berman, was cheered by the crowd as he credited the “months and months and months of writing and showing up and protest-ing and rallying so that we could get to the point where the architect of the destruction of Tony Daspolito Center is no longer running for mayor.” *Photo courtesy of Sommer Omar.*

DOWNTOWN ROUNDUP

ICE RAID ON CANAL STREET

A major enforcement operation unfolded October 21 on Canal Street in Manhattan’s Chinatown when U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal agents targeted street vendors suspected of distributing counterfeit goods. Witnesses reported dozens of agents in tactical gear, the use of pepper spray, and multiple arrests, including for obstruction and assault of officers. Local and state officials swiftly condemned the raid, with New York Attorney General Letitia James urging residents to report ICE activity via a new public form in response to civil rights concerns. The sweep reignited debates about the role of federal enforcement in New York, immigrant and vendor rights, and the tension between public safety and community trust.

DEBORAH GLICK RETIRING

After more than three decades in office, Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick announced she will retire at the end of her current term, concluding a storied career in the New York State Assembly representing Greenwich Village and Lower Manhattan. First elected in 1990 and a trailblazer as the first openly gay legislator in the state, Glick has been a fixture of local progressive politics, especially on housing, environment, and LGBTQ+ issues. Her departure will open up a competitive race for the district, and many advocates and constituents are reflecting on her influence on downtown development, sustainable design, and Community Board engagement.



FEDERAL AGENTS ARREST STREET VENDORS along Canal Street, Oct. 21, 2025. *Credit: Alex Krales/ THE CITY, CC BY-NC-ND.*

E-BIKES: SPEED LIMIT & REGULATION

The city is rolling out sweeping changes to e-bike regulation as part of efforts to improve street safety. Starting October 24, a new 15 mph speed limit applies citywide to e-bikes, e-scooters and pedal-assist commercial bikes. Officials say the cap is designed to protect pedestrians and riders alike, but critics argue the measure is difficult to enforce and may punish everyday commuters rather than bad actors. Meanwhile, the administration is also moving to crack down on uncertified lithium-ion batteries for e-mobility devices after a spate of fires in buildings. The story continues to unfold as delivery workers, advocacy groups and city agencies

debate how to balance mobility innovation with public safety risks.

HIGH-END CONDO HITS THE MARKET

A prominently placed luxury condominium has just listed in Greenwich Village, adding to the uptick in high-end residential listings downtown. The building formerly owned by fashion designer Michael Kors at 65 West 13th Street is now listed at \$18.5 million, highlighting renewed strength in the luxury apartment market south of 14th Street. Real-estate insiders say the listing signals increasing investor confidence in the area’s boutique market, even as broader Manhattan remains cautious due to interest rates and inventory. The listing will

likely stir interest among buyers looking for designer pedigree plus downtown location—with implications for comparables, future listings and neighborhood pricing dynamics.

5 WEST 13TH STREET TOWER PROPOSAL

Plans for a new luxury tower at 5 West 13th Street (along with 8-12 West 14th) triggered sharp debate in the community. The proposal features a 538-foot tall, 36 super-luxury units and no affordable-housing component. Demolition is nearing completion at the site and the future skyscraper—designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox—is set to reshape the neighborhood skyline between Fifth Avenue and Union Square. Local residents and preservation advocates argue the scale is out of context with the character of Greenwich Village and raise concerns about zoning precedent, shadowing and neighborhood change.

PAPAYA DOG CLOSES ITS DOORS

After decades as a late night mainstay in Greenwich Village at 333 Sixth Ave., Papaya Dog has quietly shuttered operations, marking the end of an era for the budget-friendly hot dog and tropical drink stand. According to Yelp listings it is now labeled “closed,” prompting nostalgic social media comments and neighborhood reflections. The closure underlines how rising rents and shifting retail footprints are impacting longstanding local businesses; even beloved food landmarks are not immune. For many residents and visitors, the loss of Papaya Dog isn’t just about the hot dogs—it’s about the cultural texture of the Village, a spot where affordability and late-night spontaneity met downtown identity.

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Berman *continued from page 1*

Andrew, you are well known in the Village for your tireless advocacy for preservation, so what brought you to the Village and to this profession?

I was born in New York City in 1969 when my parents lived in the Bronx. When I was only one, my family moved to a new affordable housing development in the Bronx called Coop City. It was isolated from the rest of the city, so I took every opportunity to come down to the Village with my school friends because it offered such an amazing variety of experiences.

When I was 15, we visited Washington Square Park where I recognized David Byrne, of the Talking Heads. He was my idol, at the peak of the Heads’ popularity, and I was in awe of seeing him in person out taking a walk. I followed him for blocks down to Greene Street in SoHo until he entered a building. I’ll never forget it. It left an impression of what the Village had to offer.

Even while I was at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, I kept coming back to the Village. I graduated with a degree that emphasized art and architectural history, and I was also politically active for various causes. After graduating, I moved to Hell’s Kitchen in

1991, started working for City Councilperson Tom Duane in 1993, and continued when he became a state senator. When the offer came in 2002 for the position of executive director at Village Preservation, I thought it was a perfect fit; I’ve been there ever since.

What are your days like, especially since the pandemic shutdowns?

I remember when the shutdown started and everything was adjusted for stay-at-home or away from crowds and remote activities. We don’t have a car so we walk everywhere, especially to and from the Village Preservation office, about a 45 minute walk. Fortunately, my husband’s parents live on the Upper West Side and we could borrow their car to get to further places.

It’s been great getting back to in-person meetings, rallies, and get-togethers. Being around the Village nearly every day is never boring, and neither is my job. The Village brings people from all over the world to experience the special architecture, history, and atmosphere that nowhere else has.

I am humbled by my respect for the job I have of sharing this special history and character with others on a daily basis. I get

to connect with others over the respect of these features and the cultural significance worth protecting.

What are your favorite things to do in the Village?

There is always something new to explore and discover, and I miss some of my favorite places from the past. Two places that continue to attract my attention are the Twin Peaks house at 102 Bedford Street with its bohemian and quirky style, and Westbeth, a momentous achievement to repurpose a large abandoned commercial laboratory and office building into one of the first artist loft residences that is still thriving today; historic preservation at work!

Professionally, my passion is to work to expand the themes of preserving the special character and cultural significance of this special place, to show people how this benefits the city and the world, even while there is a way and a place for appropriate new construction, as we’ve shown in our studies and reports. We’ve secured historic status for over 1,300 buildings and districts in the South Village, Meatpacking, East Village and NoHo areas. We’ve linked the lives

of people and events with the places in the Village, which express the historic cultural value, besides the architecture. Saving important places around the LGBTQ experience is one example of that.

What are your least favorite things?

We work very hard to show people the long and short term benefits of historic preservation, so the resistance from government agencies and real estate developers (money and lawyers) can be very frustrating, especially when promises or laws are not followed. It feels like a David vs. Goliath imbalance, but we are committed to continue to protect our Village heritage, and sometimes we win.

Any parting words?

I feel fortunate to work in Greenwich Village, where I meet people from all over the city and the world. People have contributed to Village Preservation who have only visited us from far parts of the world, but they recognize the magic of this place. So, even though we may be going through hard times right now, ultimately I think we will get to a better place for our city, country and world that we envision.

The Village View

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This newspaper is a grass roots effort, proudly created by residents of Greenwich Village. A true community effort!

Immunity Politics

BY TOM LAMIA



THE SUPREME COURT OPENED A PROVERBIAL can of worms in finding that a president does have immunity in certain factual and legal circumstances. Photo by Tom Lamia.

In agreeing to hear an appeal from the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals last year in the case of *Trump v. United States*, the Supreme Court opened a door to a constitutional labyrinth. Article II of the Constitution prescribes powers and duties of the president either acting alone (to grant pardons and commutations) or with Congress (to appoint officers and ambassadors). These are weighty and immensely consequential powers, deserving of protection from censure. No grant of immunity from prosecution or other legal redress is given in Article II or elsewhere in the Constitution. Before the transfer of power debacle of January 6, 2021, presidential immunity to shield a president had not been a necessary issue for decision.

In *Trump*, the Court took the fateful step of accepting an appeal from a lower court decision not to dismiss a criminal indictment of Trump for allegedly conspiring to overturn the 2020 election. Trump’s position was that he had absolute immunity for his actions. The wisdom of having avoided the immunity issue for centuries was set aside. The Court opened a proverbial can of worms in finding that a president does have immunity in certain factual and legal circumstances. Defining those circumstances required some tortured reasoning and opaque hair-splitting that sent a shock wave through the legal and political world.

The law established by *Trump* creates layers of analysis requiring legal definition and factual analysis by courts and juries. Vague terms of art: “outer perimeter of official responsibilities,” “core of official duties,” “within his conclusive and preclusive constitutional authority” must be plumbed and resolved. Immunity can be absolute or presumptive. Motive cannot be considered nor can potential consequences. Where the president has the power to act alone, i.e. without Congress, he has absolute immunity and, therefore, the constitutional framework of the separation of powers may preclude Congress from diluting this new absolute immunity. There is more, unfortunately. It is enough to say that the outcome of these murky explorations is a search among unknowns.

The dissenting opinion of Justice Sotomayor, joined by Justices Kagan and Jackson, raises questions that cannot be ignored or dismissed as no longer relevant now that there is a definitive opinion on immunity. Essentially, each of these justices are aghast at what lies ahead. They see unchecked presidential power that may lie beyond any practical ability to rein in lawlessness. The notional structure is that of core powers, official acts, unofficial acts, absolute immunity, presumptive immunity and no immunity. The categories and consequences seem too tortuous to easily navigate. I won’t try. In essence courts must now analyze in each case whether the crimes charged apply to the president, using the elements described above. The case may not go forward to trial until a court has ruled that immunity does not apply.

The possibilities are frightening. A lawless president, using unrestrained presidential power, is an open door to “moving fast and breaking things” on a grand scale. So far President

Trump is playing his role with great skill. This new immunity structure that applies only to presidents offers nearly total freedom from legal accountability. Bold actions will result. The Court has constructed an accommodating vehicle for an aggressive president. He can do anything he wants to do with no one to answer to and no consequences for breaking the law. Within the fuzzy limits of official acts, that include any action within the outer perimeter of his official duties, he is immune from criminal charges. We have seen already the great scope of this freedom. He can use this expansive power for good or evil: to charge corruptly through legal barriers that no longer apply or to use this

new freedom to accomplish great things. Which will it be? Utopia or Armageddon?

So far, both are at work. President Trump is single-handedly restructuring government agencies, eliminating watchdogs, taking direct control of military, justice, health, border control, science research, civil unrest, law firms, universities, and more; touching on every aspect of American and international affairs that stir his interest. Elections may restrain him and his MAGA movement, but they are far off and subject to his capacity, through immune behavior, to control or cancel.

George Washington warned in his farewell address that a government with a weak executive would be “too feeble” to stand up to partisanship (“the enterprises of faction”) and would lead to the “frightful despotism of alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge.” To avoid that cycle, “properly distributed and adjusted” government powers are needed. The opinion for the Court in *Trump* suggests that this new presidential immunity structure is such an adjustment.

As we await elections to come, both sides, MAGA Republicans and liberal Democrats, are heavily engaged in a lopsided contest for the nation’s political favor. The Democrats have ground to make up and the president’s immunity power is yet another barrier for a return to power. The courts can and will nibble at the edges of MAGA control as presidential programs are put into effect and are challenged in the courts. These issues will slowly rise to the Supreme Court, where a 6-3 conservative majority awaits. Citizens’ organizations, desperate to mobilize dissent await their opportunity to lead unhappy voters to the polls. If charismatic leaders emerge to unify these unhappy people, the scales could tip enough to give voice to their laments over lost power. The need is clear and urgent, the means less so.

The Court’s immunity decision was a watershed in the history of the presidency. This immunity decision requires legislative review and adjustment. That will not happen without Democratic wins in 2026. In *Trump*, the Court found a critical link to the Constitution’s separation of powers framework, noting that the presidency is a one-person separate branch of government. It will be argued that Congressional action to clarify or limit presidential immunity is unconstitutional.

The Village Independent Democrats Fight Back Against King Trump

BY ISIS O'FLYNN-SHAHAF



VID PIZZA NIGHT participant draws KKK members to illustrate her views on Senate and State officials. Photo: Isis O'Flynn-Shahaf.

In preparation for the October 18 No Kings Rally, The Village Independent Democrats, a local West Village political organization, hosted a pizza night and poster making party at St. John’s Lutheran Church on Christopher Street. Co-President Irene Kaufman explained her reason for participating, “It’s really about [Trump] consolidating powers in illegal ways and doing illegal things.” As representatives of social justice, political reform, and universal welfare, the VID is constantly preparing for their next move in the long-haul fight that is the restoration of democracy.

In the church 12 people sat at tables. They were using sharpies, water-based markers and No Kings branded stickers to decorate white poster boards representing their anger towards the current political climate. All of the signs displayed strong anti-fascist imagery and statements. The overall messages were: “America Has No Place for Kings,” “You Have Bad Hair” and “You Have Dictator Energy.” Funny as they were, the seriousness of the situation was apparent.

As they munched on Bleecker Street pizza and black and white cookies, VID members and neighborhood locals discussed their fears and concerns for the future of America. Many are deeply disturbed by and terrified of the mass deployment of ICE agents around NYC. They are seen as officers who “...do whatever they want,” said VID Co-President Sara Kimbell who is also a member of the Downtown Nasty Women Social Group (dnwsg.org), which strives to: “...spark civic engagement, increase voter participation...elect Democrats and...shift the balance of power in order to improve

people’s lives.” She is also an activist in the Grass Roots organization, as well as a County Committee Member for the Manhattan Democratic Party.

Community members in the VID are from diverse backgrounds, but the participants that night only included a handful of minorities.

The West Village has long been seen as a safe haven for the LGBTQ+ community, where places like Stonewall Inn advocate for gay rights. Queer nightclubs such as Monster, Playhouse, and Henrietta Hudson, represent that the West Village holds no place for discrimination. The local church, St. Luke’s, mounts a gay pride flag on its building, and even hosts choral performances for PRIDE. Unfortunately, times have changed for the neighborhood. Kaufman says fear runs through the Democratic Party in the West Village, “The trans people, the gay people, the immigrants, pick a group, everybody’s scared...it’s a shit show.” As someone who has worked diligently on the reformation of the West Village, Kaufman has witnessed firsthand the damage of the Trump administration.

As participants worked on their posters. I asked them which political issue is the most important. They responded with a unanimous, “All of them.” Vice President Remy Kothe added, “I think everything is in peril.”

Kimbell, Kaufman, and Kothe, the leaders of the VID, have full-time jobs as political activists. Before the start of the Trump administration, their lives had more balance. Now, they find themselves fully invested in a battle that seems to have no end. Kimbell was a chef coordinator for the Center for Hear-

ing and Communication until 2020 and an event specialist for GiveSmart until 2018. Kothe, who worked as an associate publisher for *InStyle Magazine* and *Time Inc.*, is also a member of the Downtown Nasty Women Social Group. She says, “Many of us had hoped that after Biden things would become more normal...I don’t even know what normal is anymore.” When asked how she has been personally impacted by the Trump administration, she replied, “I probably wouldn’t be doing this like a full time job.” Kimbell said she had been up since 4 a.m. worrying about what she would be reading in the news the next day, “We live it, we breathe it on a daily basis...it’s affecting me now.” Kimbell says she is not surprised by the steps President



CAROLINE FRANCES, VID MEMBER, holds up her poster illustrating what is under attack from the Trump administration. Photo: Isis O'Flynn-Shahaf.

Village Alliance Launches \$2 Million “Project Green” Campaign to Transform Greenwich Village Streetscape

BY JEAN TUCKER

Recently, Scott Hobbs, the executive director of Village Alliance, took me for a walk down 8th Street from his office to Astor Place Plaza. He was showing me examples of “Project Green,” a new fundraising initiative by the Village Alliance Business Improvement District (BID) to dramatically improve the green infrastructure of the Village.

As we walked eastward, he pointed out a series of tree beds with new tree guards and improved plantings arrayed like a string of pearls down the street. In Astor Place Plaza, he brought my attention to a row of safety planters spilling over with autumn greenery dividing the sidewalk from the busy bike lane along Lafayette Street. On the east side of the plaza, there were several large bioswales designed to soak up rainwater to ease street flooding. We also ran across one of the Village Alliance’s safety ambassadors whose job is to liaise with business owners and to keep an eye on general conditions.

As I stood in the middle of Astor Place Plaza, I was suddenly struck by that magnified sense of place you sometimes feel when the street space opens up and you feel the scale of the buildings, the pedestrians and the traffic: hive-like, vertically-uplifting and mind-expanding. Sometimes I just have to stop and reflect on what an amazing neighborhood I live in. The question is, could it be made even better?

That’s essentially the question the Village Alliance asked, looking for the biggest and quickest way to improve the Village. Their answer is Project Green, an ambitious program developing new green infrastructure that aims to enhance pedestrian safety, to improve unadorned streets with new trees and plantings, and to develop a few attractive pocket parks with street seating.

The Village Alliance district is centered in Greenwich Village along 8th Street, to Astor Place and St. Marks Place, bisected by Sixth Avenue, Fifth Avenue, University Place, Broadway, Lafayette and Third Avenue. The BID provides sidewalk cleaning, safety patrols, seasonal landscaping and maintenance, as well as organization for local businesses to react to issues that impact commercial attractiveness and safety. The Village Alliance is funded primarily by property tax assessments to commercial properties and by occasional grants. Project Green is designed to go beyond these functions to accelerate new landscaping and safety infrastructure by tapping into more direct community funding.

As Scott explained, “Green spaces are more than beautification; they’re essential infrastructure for a healthier, more sustainable, and more welcoming Village.”

“When I first got here, our budget for street improvements was very low,” said Scott. “We could maybe do one or two tree beds a year, which, in relation to our size, is



“PROJECT GREEN” aims to dramatically improve the green infrastructure of the Village. Above, a rendering to illustrate pocket park seating at East 8th Street. Renderings and map courtesy of the Village Alliance.



DISTRICT MAP indicating areas for Project Green’s improvement proposal.



SHADE TREES IN LARGE PLANTERS FOR RUTH WITTENBERG TRIANGLE, seen in the rendering above, will provide welcome shade in an existing seating area.

not a lot. So we did a needs assessment just to see, what is the scope of issues that we can seek to address, and how much would that cost? How can we improve the area using city standards, doing projects that don’t require a review, and that can be implemented

as soon as we get the money?

In making their needs assessment, the BID also discovered that treeless streets have a much higher vacancy rate. Money received from city and state government is very helpful but is limited to certain kinds

of improvements and allocated to a general area perhaps going through the Parks Department for implementation but not necessarily to the streets focused on by the Village Alliance.

Hoping to tap into the wealth and concerns of the residents of Greenwich Village, while focusing on speed of implementation, Project Green’s goals include:

- 120+ Enhanced tree beds to improve tree health and to add native perennial greenery.
- 110+ Pedestrian safety planters to separate roadways from sidewalk and crosswalk areas.
- 100+ New shade trees in large planters where in-ground planting is not possible to add shade and greenery along busy corridors.
- Tables and chairs for pocket parks.
- Shade trees in large planters for Ruth Wittenberg Triangle (at Sixth Avenue, between 8th and 9th streets) to provide welcome shade in an existing seating area.

They set a goal of raising \$2 million over the next five years. Since Project Green’s rollout in August, \$300,000 has already been raised, most contributed by Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine and NY State Senator Brian Kavanagh. Founding benefactors include NYU and Buchbinder & Warren and neighborhood benefactors include The Public Theater and 107 University Place.

The Initiatives tab on the Village Alliance website includes before and after renderings showing examples of potential streetscape improvements. (villagealliance.org/projectgreen). A donate button allows one to contribute from \$50 to \$4,000 which will provide money that can be put to work immediately.

For those wanting to sponsor specific improvements which include an option of name recognition, choices include \$2,500 for a pocket park table and chairs, \$4,000 for a tree bed enhancement, and \$8,000 for a large planter that can support a shade tree (including the tree and planting). Reach out to Village Alliance directly if you would like to make a major gift.

As an urban gardener and a Greenwich Villager, I know I’m ready to contribute. More trees, shrubs, grasses and perennials make our urban landscape more welcoming and healthful. I wish all of us would adopt a corner of our neighborhood to nurture plant life but in the meantime, we can help Village Alliance create new green infrastructure that can change our community’s trajectory: creating streetscapes that are designed to keep us safe as it helps us slow down and notice our surroundings, improve our moods and encourage interactions with others. And who doesn’t want to make Greenwich Village even better?

Bleecker Street Conversion to Residential

BY BRIAN J PAPE, AIA, LEED-AP



THIS FRONT VIEW OF THE EXISTING 43-49 BLEECKER STREET loft building shows the subway station stairs in front of the cast-iron storefront. Credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.

The Community Board 2 Landmarks Committee reviewed a proposal for the adaptive reuse and residential conversion of 43-49 Bleecker Street, near the corner of Lafayette Street, a six-story masonry building in NoHo. The project involves substantial exterior modifications to the Classical Revival building, which was originally constructed in 1896 by architect Ralph S. Townsend for owner Harry Chaffee.

Since this is in a historic district, full restoration of the south (fronting Bleecker Street) façade will include repairs to cast-iron storefronts, cornices and other historic elements, with all existing windows throughout the structure being replaced, according to architect Noel Wong of ADB Associates.

At the ground level, the storefront openings will be reconfigured with new black-painted aluminum doors, display windows, and replicated historic iron grilles. The proposal presented accessibility upgrades such as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant ramp and landings at new entry configurations, since the ground floor is sev-

eral steps above the sidewalk. These ramps will unfortunately create a very crowded condition on the sidewalk since the 6 train at Bleecker Street has a stairway directly in front of this building, severely hampering pedestrian movement. The B, D, F, and M trains are nearby at Broadway–Lafayette Street.

Zoning documents indicate the building will retain its existing height of 85 feet and maintain a lot coverage of 94 percent, as reported by Max Gillespie in New York *Yimby’s* August 30, 2025 issue. The development will yield 11 residential units, five of which are new conversions, across approximately 30,442 square feet of residential floor area. That’s 11 units on five floors, or about 2,700 square feet on average per unit. On the rooftop, new stair and elevator bulkheads and mechanical screening will be added, and balconies will be installed on the rear (north) façade as added amenities.

If approved, hopefully it will be with a careful redesign of the ramps so they don’t encroach on pedestrian space too much

TOASTING – AND PROTECTING – OUR LIT’RY GHOSTS

It’s Time for a Greenwich Village Literary Landmark

BY STEVE REYNOLDS

Participating recently in the Village Trip Festival, and attending several of its literary-themed tours, proved enlightening and inspired some rumination...American literary history has many contributors.

But the epicenter of American letters is here in New York, and within one part of town in particular. As long-time Greenwich Village residents know, writers such as Henry James, Henry Miller, James Baldwin, Djuna Barnes, Thomas Paine, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, E.B. White, ee cummings and Edna St. Vincent Millay are only a small sample of the important writers who worked here in the Village (you can get a full list at villagepreservation.org/2024/04/22/31-literary-icons-of-the-greenwich-village-historic-district).

Why did so many writers come here, to find voice, to practice their craft? Inspired by the work of earlier artists, of course, but also for a community, for the amplification that occurs when people driven by creative vision find themselves at the same place at the same time.

But for that to happen, you often need a “third place,” as coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg. As the noted non-profit executive Donna Brodie of the Writers Room has said, “There’s a certain energy that occurs, you can almost feel a kind of current, when artists are working in close proximity, interacting with each other.”

This may feel intuitive, but research has actually established a connection between the availability of gathering places for artists—cafes, salons, taverns, etc., and the acceleration of various artistic movements in the 19th and 20th centuries.

I was thinking about this when I took the excellent Village Trip tour—“Beatnik Greenwich Village,” led by historian Marc Catapano. He mentioned that this spring is the 75th anniversary of the original draft of *On the Road*, delivered by Kerouac in a feverish three-week jag in April 1951, on a 20-odd foot long spool of teletype paper.

While his ideas were germinating, we know that Kerouac frequented the poetry and folk cafes of the day, often landing at the Kettle of Fish bar on MacDougal (its first location), with his band of fellow writers. The list is well known: Ginsberg, DiPrima, Corso... a few years later, those working words and music, like Seeger, Ochs and Dylan, also gathered there.

As Catapano later asked, “What if, in 1950, they hadn’t opened the Kettle?”

It’s fun to wonder: who’s to know which chance encounter, riposte, overheard phrase or opinion, helped spark an inspiration to

the artists gathered there?

Believe what you like, but as Oldenburg and Brodie attest, it’s likely that places like the Kettle help make art.

As the Beatnik tour and others brought home, the departure of such gathering places would be a poor thing for any city. But for Greenwich Village, USA, it’s a catastrophe, both for our sense of history and for those in the neighborhood, old or young, still trying to produce literary or other artistic work.

WHAT’S TO BE DONE: TOAST THE GHOSTS

One can still achieve some connection with the ghosts of our literary past, in the form of a couple of legendary public houses now merged into one.

The Kettle of Fish (now at 59 Christopher), when moving to this address in 1999, landed, by some cosmic synchrony, in the same space as another cherished literary gathering place, the Lion’s Head.

In 1966, in proximity to the original *Village Voice* offices, writers from the *Voice* and elsewhere came to “the Head” for the nourishment of each other’s company (sometimes even for the food). The Head had a famous wall of book covers representing works published by its patrons: Frank McCourt, Pete Hamill, Fred Exley, and many others. McCourt is quoted that having his book, *Angela’s Ashes*, on the wall at the Head meant more to him than winning the Pulitzer that year.

After the Beatnik tour, the Kettle was duly visited. Trace elements of both establishments do survive. There is the mysterious back room, where Jessica Lange waited tables. The big round table, where a mix of the Clancy Brothers, Dylan, and spontaneous others would gather for late night sing-songs, is still there. There is a back wall for darts, a Kettle fixture. And there is the Kettle’s neon sign, the same sign behind Kerouac in the famous 1957 portrait by Jerry Yulsman. Stand in the alcove of the back room with a whiskey in your hand, and maybe you can imagine Bobby Kennedy at the Head, deciding to run for the Senate seat from New York.

Of course things have changed. The wall of book jackets is gone. On certain nights the customers are a lot younger than Bob Dylan. But apart from these obvious times, some everyday essence of the two bars could be felt.

As writer Tom Deignan wrote of the Lion’s Head in a 2007 tribute:

“...it was a *quintessential New York joint...it managed to be blue-collar and ethnic, as well as artistic and intellectual, a vi-*

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Village Blueprints

BUILDING THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S FUTURE
BY BRIAN J. PAPE, AIA, LEED-AP

The Transformation of Sixth Avenue at 14th Street



STARTING IN 2023, 525 Sixth Avenue, aka 100-106 West 14th Street, is a 13-story residential building of red brickwork which features a series of recessed or protruding volumes with numerous rounded corners, and multiple stepped setbacks, adding a distinctive style to the building. *Credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.*

Ever since the pandemic of 2020, not a month has gone by that 14th Street has not had major new construction occurring at the intersection of Ninth and Sixth avenues, especially on Sixth Avenue.

This intersection of Sixth Avenue and 14th Street has long been dominated by the nine-story, ca.1906, mixed-use elevator building at 60 West 14th Street. The first Macy’s department store was located on Sixth Avenue between 13th and 14th streets, before moving to the present-day store at Herald Square on West 34th Street in 1902, where Macy’s was able to grow into the world’s largest department store building. I am filling in between the lines, since my search for the exact location of Macy’s isn’t conclusive. As I study the west side of Sixth Avenue between 13th and 14th streets, the tenements or small retail buildings on small lots would not suggest the presence of a store like Macy’s. But Macy’s moving to Herald Square in 1902, and the building of 60 West 14th Street in 1906 would indicate to me that it replaced a large department store like Macy’s.

A new 13-story residential contemporary building at 101 West 14th Street, aka 531 Sixth Avenue, started with construction in 2019, marking the beginning of radical changes to this intersection. It was designed by ODA Architecture and developed by Gemini Rosemont, yielding 44 condominium units, with interiors designed by Whitehall

Interiors in one- to four-bedroom layouts, as well as 5,830 square feet of ground-floor retail space for two shops. According to Michael Young’s *Report in YIMBY NY*, January 5, 2023, Compass Development Group and The Franklin Team lead the marketing for the property, which strangely, now claims it was designed by Studio C Architects. The building is equipped with amenities for the comfort and convenience of its residents, including a doorman and concierge service, ensuring security, elevator, bike room, storage availability, laundry and a gym within the building. Its cubistic rendering of window groups and frames in a metallic finish make this building stand out from the usual brick or all-glass new buildings in the area.

Shortly thereafter, at the opposite corner, construction commenced on the 12-story residential building at 540 Sixth Avenue called FÖRENA.

Designed by Morris Adjmi Architects and developed by Landsea Homes and DNA Development, the 80,000-square-foot structure contains 50 condominium units in one- to three-bedroom layouts starting at \$1.575 million, and ground-floor retail space. It was built by Ryder Construction and completed in 2023, according to *YIMBY New York*. The brick-clad main volume blends in so well with the east neighbor building that a casual glance could look like the two buildings were joined together at the line of balconies. At the upper levels of FORENA, cascading setbacks lined with railings for private outdoor terraces employ a façade composed of gray aluminum paneling framing recessed windows.

Homes will feature ceiling heights of 13 feet and oversized windows, open-style kitchens with a complete Miele appliance



THIS CA. 1906 MIXED-USE masonry building at 60 W 14th Street has dominated the Sixth Avenue corner for many years. It may have replaced the original Macy’s Department Store building. Prior to 2019, the other corners were rather unimpressive with smaller scale buildings. *Credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.*

package, Calacatta Regina marble slab countertops and backsplashes, and lacquered Italian cabinetry hand finished by artisans outside of Venice. Bathrooms come with Calacatta Regina marble and a custom-designed oak vanity. Residential amenities include a fitness center, a residential lounge, a Zen garden courtyard, a bike room, extra storage space, and a communal rooftop terrace with outdoor kitchen that will provide residents with panoramic views.

“FÖRENA embodies what we always thrive to achieve at Morris Adjmi Architects,

which is to contribute something authentic to the fabric of a neighborhood, but with this project there was an opportunity to take that even further – to create something more dimensional, rhythmic, and respectful,” said Morris Adjmi, founder of Morris Adjmi Architects.

The project also involves upgrades to the 14th Street subway station servicing the F, M, and L trains, with underground access to the 1, 2, and 3 trains along Seventh Avenue. The PATH trains to New Jersey are also accessible from the subway entrance directly at the corner of the property. The busy 14th Street subway station was modernized with MTA elevator improvements.

Although having major construction at the same time on both sides of the street was a great congestion difficulty for a couple of years, the resulting improvements are now welcomed by the community.

About the time these projects were completed, development from Modi Feibish on the southwest corner of Sixth Avenue and West 14th Street began with the demolition of unlandmarked and deteriorating low-rise structures, including the Romanesque Revival building that formerly anchored the corner, located outside the Greenwich Village Historic District. 525 Sixth Avenue, aka 100-106 West 14th Street and dubbed “The Village West,” despite the fact that it is not really in the West Village, is a 13-story residential building of red brickwork which features a series of recessed or protruding volumes with numerous rounded corners, and multiple stepped setbacks, adding a distinctive touch to the building’s overall appearance, as reported by Michael Young on *YIMBY*, April 4, 2025. It was designed by BSKS Architects and developed by Izaki Group, with Alba Services as the general contractor for the property. Many of the apartments have floor-to-ceiling windows. The 145-foot-tall structure will contain 123,000 square feet for 71 condominium units plus ground floor commercial space. The building’s main entrance will be located within a tall arched opening along Sixth Avenue, below a sidewalk canopy, while the rest of the first level will be enclosed in floor-to-ceiling glass for the retail frontage.

525 Sixth Avenue’s anticipated completion date is slated for spring 2026, as noted on site posters.

The result of all these new residential construction projects will be hundreds of new residents in 165 apartments, hundreds of square feet for commercial space and amenities, and improved subway stations with elevators, not to mention interesting architecture for the streetscape. And that’s not counting all the other projects that have kept other parts of 14th Street buzzing. Stay tuned!



STARTING IN 2019, two other corners of Sixth Avenue and 14th Street were cleared of smaller scale buildings, and the contemporary styled 13-story residential building at 101 West 14th Street, aka 531 6th Avenue on the left, and the 12-story brick residential building at 540 Sixth Avenue on the right, were constructed. *Credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.*

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KARL BISSINGER

A Village Friendship

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

Old age laid siege to my friend Karl Bissinger’s conviction of freedom. He was a gay man out since World War II, a once-famous fashion and portrait photographer turned fervent anti-war activist with the Greenwich Village Peace Center—and old age volleyed a never-ending escalation of insults to his deepest sense of self.

Karl and I were friends for the last ten years of his life, and in the last several years before his death in 2008, he declined. He suffered the deterioration of vision, balance, and grace, and then the sudden forbearance and pity of friends and neighbors.

There was the time he was forced to rely on me to fetch him from the hospital after eye surgery—and his fury when I expressed alarm over all the Tylenol he gobbled. During one epically wrenching Gay Pride weekend, I stayed with him after out-patient prostate surgery gone terribly wrong, which resulted first in a blocked catheter and then a stroke.

And then there was the time he was found wandering lost through the West Village and they tried to keep him at St. Vincent’s Hospital. When Karl escaped to go home, the police fetched him back to the hospital and he moaned to me “I’m in prison,” while also asking “Does it hurt very much to watch me lose my mind?”

I told him it hurt me only when he appeared to be in mental or physical pain; anything else I could handle.

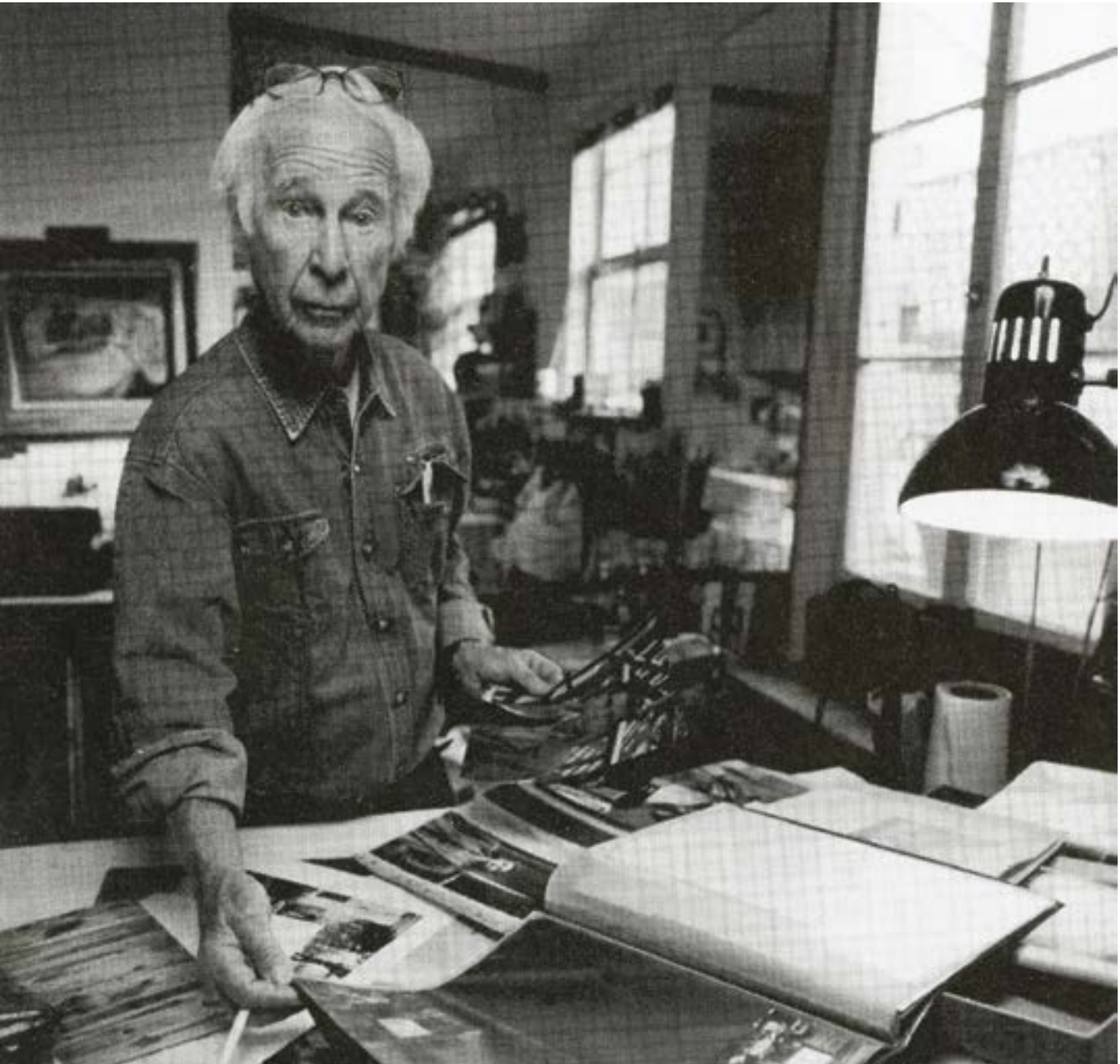
Weeks in St. Vincent’s captivity went by. Karl was then transferred to Village Care, the nursing home on 12th Street. Ironically, Village Care put out an annual wall calendar as a fundraiser, Legends of the Village, and Karl was their April legend that year.

By the time Karl was released he was so out of it, I was frightened. He actually couldn’t recognize people. Karl’s son David arranged daytime homecare.

Karl was prescribed Aricept, a dementia drug. In the familiarity of home, he slowly regained much of himself. I brought luminous white pansies for his roof garden, and his case manager, after watching Karl tend to them, allowed him to leave home under supervision. We resumed movie-going, though I had to resort to devious tactics to get Karl to let me accompany him home.

Westbeth takes up a city block and there are multiple exits. Once Karl bewildered me by letting me out a back exit; he planned to take a walk around the building by himself. “I’m lost,” I said truthfully as I refused to leave, instead following him. For weeks he mocked me, mewling “I’m lost.” I tried to tell him that two simultaneous things were true—I had been lost and I’d been reluctant to leave him alone. He didn’t believe me.

When we walked to Regal Cinema to see *The Last King of Scotland*, Karl started weaving diagonally across the sidewalk. Right in front of the theater, he collapsed. A



THIS PHOTO OF KARL BISSINGER, taken in his Westbeth apartment, was the author photo for his book, *The Luminous Years: Portraits at Mid-Century*, published in 2003. Photo credit: © Zachary Fechner.

young colleague from my workplace walked by, stepped over Karl, then hustled along as if embarrassed. The police picked Karl up from the sidewalk and he cheerfully insisted on going in to see the film, so we did.

Months later, that young colleague was in my apartment. A photographer, she admired Karl’s 1948 photo of the author Colette. I told her it was shot by the same guy splayed out on the sidewalk whom she’d stepped over. She told me she’d thought he was drunk. “No,” I replied, “he was having a stroke.” It turned out she’d actually studied Karl’s work in art school.

At home, Karl was rigidly insistent that anyone visiting ignore the caregiving aide. The aide’s very presence was a traumatic injury to his dignity. For me to talk to an aide in front of Karl was forbidden.

So the day I ran into Mary, one of Karl’s best aides, on the street, it was an occasion, a rare opportunity to connect. Mary told me

that she’d scolded Karl for being nasty to me, that she had described me to him as his only friend (he had methodically dropped everyone else).

Then she casually mentioned Karl’s response: “Phyllis knows I love her.”

This was stunning to me. In fact, I knew nothing of the sort, only that I loved him.

Before his end, Karl chose to go off life-prolonging drugs and into at-home hospice care. Between the dementia and the strokes, he struggled for words.

I read him Muriel Rukeyser’s *The Hostages*, part of her poem *Breaking Open*, which praised Karl’s offer to make himself a target of U.S. bombing raids in Vietnam. I described to him the myriad ways in which he’d had a marvelous, accomplished, and honorable life.

Perhaps a week before Karl died, I was visiting. His son David called from San Francisco, and Karl jovially told him I was

making lunch. Then Karl asked David to remind him of his bankcard password. Karl wrote the password on a slip of paper. My heart sank, knowing the slip would immediately disappear.

After they hung up, I suggested that Karl tell me the password. He said no.

Then I suggested he tell me where he was putting the slip of paper. He said no again.

I told him I loved him, but that it hurt me he didn’t trust me.

I watched as Karl, with extreme difficulty, gathered the words to respond. It wasn’t that he didn’t trust me, he said, but rather that he couldn’t bear to be reminded of his condition. I recognized that for him to put such effort into articulating something so vulnerable was an act of love.

This concludes the three-part series. You can find the entire series at villageview.nyc.



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Literary Landmark *continued from page 7*

brant combination.”

Standing amongst a group of patrons that evening, my interlocutors included an Off-Broadway producer, a master carpenter, acting students, two guys from the MTA, an app designer, and a family visiting from Sweden. And a couple of writers, even. At least in this surviving port, there was still some connection to be had to the ghosts of another time, an all-welcome community of the arts and the everyday. Toast them while they linger.

WHAT’S TO BE DONE: WHY NOT A MEMORIAL?

When discussing things historic in the neighborhood, one does well to confer with Andrew Berman, executive director of the Village Preservation non-profit, who was unaware of any such memorial.

Is it time to ask “why not?”

In the case of Christopher Street’s Stonewall Monument, an historically significant site has

been preserved, and the Stonewall building now also offers a library and visitor resource.

Why not something similar for the literary history of the Village? Imagine a space where visitors could access the history of Village writers and their works? Browse exhibits, access papers, learn about writers?

Perhaps certain institutions might have an interest in helping. Is it crazy to think that New York Public Library System might participate in a project to preserve and extend the presence of key works and authors?

Perhaps an institution of learning, with an interest in the culture of letters, would partner in such a venture, in so doing contributing to the study of the city’s literary heritage.

Such a space might even become known as a gathering place for writers, reinforcing New York and the Village as a place where art can still be made.

Why not? If we can’t imagine it, we’re already lost.

He said, “In the midst of hate, I found there was, within me, an invincible love. In the midst of tears, I found there was, within me, an invincible smile. In the midst of chaos, I found there was, within me, an invincible calm. I realized, through it all, that in the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there’s something stronger, something better, pushing right back.”
ALBERT CAMUS



Wanna Chat?

BY KEITH MICHAEL

Inside Voice (IV): Uh, how about, ‘No.’ Please don’t talk to me.

Outside Voice (OV): Sure. I just heard that there’s a Marsh Wren over at Gansevoort Peninsula in Hudson River Park—in the north salt marsh. ‘Build it and they will come.’ It’s amazing. Before this marsh was added to the waterfront two years ago, there probably hadn’t been Marsh Wrens visiting lower Manhattan in a century. Wanna walk over there with me?

IV: Please don’t say, ‘Yes.’ I do love the camaraderie of looking for birds with others also interested in looking for birds. I especially love to inspire people to look for birds. But honestly, I don’t like to talk very much while I’m looking for birds, and I really don’t like to talk while I’m looking at a bird.

OV: Hey, great, let’s go. Recently, there were dueling star avian attractions around town: a white-eye-ringed, though otherwise bland, Connecticut Warbler in Trinity Church Cemetery at Wall Street, and a flashy, white-spectacled, Yellow-breasted Chat at the, of all places, busy block-through Verizon Plaza near Sixth Avenue off of 42nd Street. Both birds stayed for several days in these small green spaces which left plenty of time for them to attract their satellites of admirers. Through the electronic grapevine, if a “special” bird shows up, a cacophony of bird watchers and bird photographers shows up too. A few years ago, there was a chicken-like, strutting gnome of a Virginia Rail that lured a crowd to Abingdon Square Park.

IV: I don’t know if this Marsh Wren will be special enough to pitch a birders’ circus tent. We’ll see. Really, I hope that we have the place relatively to ourselves, other than tourists asking us to take photos of them looking toward Little Island. Of course, among the potential bird admirers, there are friends. A simple head nod will acknowledge, “Ha! You’re here too.” Then, it’s back to keeping a lookout for the fancy bird of the day. But then there are the dreaded run-on monologues: “I’ve had better views. The light’s bad. Terrible background. I got a new camera/lens. My settings were wrong. Didn’t I see something you posted? Oh, that wasn’t



A CELEBRITY YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT at Verizon Plaza. Photos by Keith Michael.



A WIDE-EYED Connecticut Warbler at Trinity Church Cemetery.

you. Have you seen the (insert any other bird in any other location that is not here)? I just got back from (insert any far-away destination) so I’m barely awake. The bird’s too far away. The bird’s too close. There’s too much clutter. Maybe yesterday was better. I heard that earlier was better. Maybe later will be better. I think I’ll try for the (insert another bird somewhere else.)” Please, stop talking!

OV: Particularly at this migratory time of year, NYC’s multitude of tiny parks—magnets for tourists, office mates on their lunch breaks, office-less laptop wielding entrepreneurs, idlers, security personnel, dog walkers, joggers, the whole panoply of urban life—can easily become a days-long stopover for an A-list migratory bird. In Manhattan alone: Why Bryant Park? Why Madison

Square Park? Why Abington Square? Gansevoort Peninsula? Trinity Church Cemetery? Through happenstance, each park can become a bird’s smorgasbord for a few days to refuel for the long travel days ahead.

IV: While looking for the celebrity bird, I like to find the other birds who lead equally elusive, poetic, difficult, photogenic, humbling lives. Maybe it’s a local Catbird or Mockingbird. It might be a tail-bobbing Palm Warbler who’s travelled just as far next to an elfin Winter Wren who’s even more difficult to catch a glimpse of. It’s possibly more exciting to see a rusty Hermit Thrush tugging on a too-big-to-eat-in-one-bite worm, a choir of newly arrived White-throated Sparrows, or a Common Yellow-throat browsing the fall chrysanthemums who suddenly composes a Matisse-worthy explosion of patterns and colors.

OV: Just last week at Verizon Plaza, and this conversation reels out over and over again in pocket parks all over the city, a well-dressed Italian tourist, flummoxed by the dozen, long-lensed photographers rushing around the park, ventured, “Scusi. What you all are looking for?” Smiling, among the multitudes, I volunteer, “It’s a bird. Special. Not rare. But only a few show up each fall. Nice to see. Bright yellow. Here, I’ll get a photo on my phone with the name: Yellow-breasted Chat. Oh, sorry, there, it’s flying. Bye.” (Head-bobbing apology.)

IV: Answering this polite question teeters between my wanting to be helpful and enthusiastic, but really, in its brevity and trying to use simple English, my just wanting to run with the other, chatty, photographers, and follow the bird.

OV: This is where the Marsh Wren has been seen: the Gansevoort Peninsula salt marsh. No other birders or photographers along the whole north side, only the mid-day, happy barks of dogs in the dog run.

IV: Oh no, that means that we have to find that skulky Marsh Wren on our own!

OV: Watch the marsh grass for any movement that’s not the wind. Sorry, I’ve been talking the whole time. What’s new with you? Shh, there’s the wren, bathing under those reeds.

Blackstone Coffee Roaster

The Local Coffee Shop that Brings Hospitality and Community to the West Village

BY ISIS O’FLYNN-SHAHAF



SAM AND HIS SON RAY behind the counter at Blackstone. Photo: Isis O’Flynn-Shahaf.

BLACKSTONE COFFEE ROASTER 502 HUDSON STREET

If you walk around the cobblestone streets of the West Village on a Saturday or Sunday morning at around 9 a.m., you will find a never-ending line wrapping around the corner of Hudson and Christopher streets. Chattering locals anxiously wait for their steaming cup of drip coffee with cream, blueberry muffin, breakfast burrito, and most importantly, their morning chat with Sam.

Taking after his hard working father who opened Jessie’s Gourmet Deli and ran it from 1979-2011, Sam opened Blackstone Coffee Roaster in 2004 with the hope of establishing a family-run business that would present itself as a communal center for the West Village. Blackstone serves fresh house-brewed coffee, a variety of luxury espresso beverages (my favorite is their vanilla iced latte), protein packed sandwiches, warm, flaky pastries, refreshing smoothies, and a selection of other treats and beverages. So what makes this seemingly casual spot the most popular coffee shop in the neighborhood? The food and coffee are spectacular, but it’s truly the relationships that are formed with the friendly staff members that keep people coming.

While enjoying my regular iced latte and a warm cheese Danish, compliments of Sam, I began speaking to a man sitting next to me who was eating a cinnamon raisin bagel with cream cheese, and sipping on a small hot coffee. Charles has been coming to Blackstone ever since they first opened. He said he comes here instead of the other plethora of coffee shops in the area “because of Sam.” Sam laughed at Charles’ comment and thanked him. I turned to Sam who was sitting across from me at our round, patio-style table in the outdoor seating structure and asked about the method to his success. “At other places, you’re just a number,” he

said. “Here, we know you.” During our conversation, we would repeatedly be interrupted by an enthusiastic customer saying hi to Sam. There were a total of eight people who passed by and Sam greeted each of them: “How’s work going?” “You look amazing!” “I haven’t seen you in a while, where have you been?” If you’ve ever seen the TV show *Gilmore Girls*, you can think of Blackstone as the Luke’s Diner of the West Village.

When I think of my favorite restaurants and coffee shops, they all have great people and feel like home. It does not matter if a business has freshly imported Beluga caviar delivered on a shining silver platter...if the staff isn’t kind, the experience is destroyed. A coffee shop is always more than just a place to get coffee. It is a momentary escape from reality. It is somewhere you feel that

you belong and are understood. The majority of Sam’s customers are not from the city, and Sam says, “This is their home.” Having a space that feels like an extension of your home matters more than having the most luxurious coffee beans. Especially in a city like New York where human interaction is brief, cold, and sometimes abrasive, the staff at Blackstone is like a breath of fresh air. Even if your day is going to be filled with chaotic excel sheets and micromanaging bosses, at least you can start your morning with a refreshing conversation at Blackstone.

Alex and Ray, Sam’s sons, started working at Blackstone when they graduated from college. They always know your order, greet you with a warm and authentic smile, and put you in a better mood than when you first came in. The routine of coming into your

local coffee shop for your morning beverage is ritualistic, and without the right environment, the first parts of your day can be ruined. Sam recognizes how important authentic customer service is, “All of the customers that come here, they all have their own problems. At home, their job, family. They all come here to see me and I make them feel better.”

Sam raised Alex and Ray to live by the same principles that his father instilled in him: always follow his lead, customer service comes first, and cleanliness is key. The trio is an indomitable force on a weekend morning, with a horde of hungry people ordering multiple complex coffee orders and breakfast sandwiches. Even when there are 20 people waiting in line and the morning rush is hitting hard, Sam goes out of his way to make sure each guest feels seen and appreciated. Sam is grateful to be a part of the Hudson Street community, “My favorite part of my job is the people. Everyone is nice, professional, intelligent, and down to earth.”

As a fiercely loyal customer of Blackstone, I can verify that Sam and his sons take the time to know me beyond just my coffee order. I was 16 years old when Blackstone opened, and every morning on my way to school, I would stop to pick up my breakfast which consisted of an iced latte and a blueberry muffin. My order has remained the same for eight years. Sometimes, Sam would give me the muffin on the house, which meant a lot to a teenage girl who relied on a \$50 weekly allowance to get her through the week. I took a small hiatus from Blackstone when I was in college in 2019, but when I returned in 2023, Sam immediately recognized me and asked me how my life had been. Ever since then, I have gone almost every single morning, even if the walk is out of my way.

The Life and Times of Diane Keaton

BY ROGER PARADISO

Diane Keaton died on October 11, 2025. She left behind what I thought was her greatest period of public anxiety and acting—the Annie Hall era. She inspired many a woman to dress in her manner—like a boyish Buster Keaton. She liked loose men’s clothes and is responsible, along with her muse Katharine Hepburn, for women wearing pants and men’s shirts. Diane was also known for wearing hats. This “Annie Hall” look inspired many young women. However, there was only one Annie Hall and she flourished in the 70s to early 80s. During that time

Diane was in *The Godfather*, *Reds* and *Annie Hall* (for which she won the Academy Award and Golden Globe for Best Actress). Her career exploded with such iconic roles. It was simply known as “The Annie Hall Decade.”

She was born Diane Hall in California in 1946 and grew up in Santa Ana. The character in the iconic film was called Annie Hall as a nod to Diane whose nickname (Annie), personal style and personality impressed the co-writers Marshall Brickman and Woody Allen. In the early screenings of the film,

they kept adding her character to more and more scenes in the film because she was fantastic and funny.

Diane arrived in New York in 1965, enrolled in acting classes and changed her last name to Keaton, her mother’s maiden name. She made her debut in the landmark musical *Hair* which started in the Village and moved on to Broadway. Diane was the one who survived with her principles and clothes on. She refused to parade around the stage nude. She refused to accept the 50 bucks the actors were given if they were naked on the stage.

Diane’s next break was a role in Woody Allen’s play, *Play It Again Sam*, which led to a decade of original and creative work. Woody and Diane were a couple but the anxiety riddled relationship cooled down to best friends shortly after *Annie Hall* finished shooting and the awards came for her and the film. Other films spawned relationships with her leading men including Warren Beatty (*Reds*) and Al Pacino (*The Godfather*). She was nominated for an Oscar and a Golden Globe for her work in *Reds*.

continued on page 18

LETTER to the EDITOR

The Odd-Year Election

In a few days we will vote in the country’s odd-year general election. In NYC’s June primary I received literature from candidates vying for various city-wide offices, a total of 75 pieces (fliers, endorsements, etc.) and a 2025 Primary Election Voter Guide (mailed by the NYC Board of Elections) weighing two pounds.

I’m curious as to how much literature I will receive regarding the general election. As of mid-October I have received one mail-

ing from one candidate running for mayor, a promotional piece by the New York City Council endorsing its position on certain ballot proposals (changes to the New York City Charter) and the 2025 General Election Voter Guide all coming in at a few ounces. (By the way, there was very little to no information regarding the six proposed changes to the NY State Constitution and the New York City Charter. Why is there so little attention paid to the changes to the rules that guide our state and local government;

changes that will affect the public and the way new housing is approved?)

Does anyone read these mailings? Do the mailings make a difference? Is there a better way for a candidate to communicate with voters? What can be done to encourage greater communication between voters and those candidates seeking our vote? And, what about those changes to the state and local constitutions? How do we learn about the impact these changes will have on our lives?

— Siggys Raible



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Tavern on Jane: Where Everyone Does Indeed Know Your Name

BY GARY STERN



DESPITE THE PANDEMIC, RISING PRICES, AND ALL SORTS OF VOLATILITY, Tavern on Jane just celebrated its 30th anniversary and has become a fixture in the neighborhood. *Photo courtesy of Tavern on Jane.*

It was October 1995 and Michael Stewart and his partner, Horton Foote Jr., wanted to open a neighborhood restaurant and bar somewhere in Manhattan. They looked at storefronts in Gramercy Park, Hell’s Kitchen and the Theater District but saw nothing that clicked. They were looking for a “turn-key” situation, a functioning eatery which didn’t require costly rebuilding.

Finally they ended up in the West Village on Jane Street and Eighth Avenue and found a defunct seafood eatery that worked for them. They named it Tavern on Jane. Despite the pandemic, rising prices and all sorts of volatility, Tavern on Jane just celebrated its 30th anniversary and has become a fixture in the neighborhood where, as in the old sitcom *Cheers*, “everyone knows your name.”

Their original goal was to make the restaurant “community-oriented, an extension of

the neighborhood, to make it a local nightly place,” Stewart explains. He had been a bartender at Walker’s in Tribeca, another local watering hole that had thrived for years, where he learned the ins and outs of what it takes to engage customers.

The partners invested \$85,000 from Foote and \$65,000 from Stewart to capitalize the eatery, without needing any other investors, and were on their way. Foote moved on to other ventures in 2014 when Stewart acquired his share and assumed sole ownership.

“We wanted to serve good, quality, home-style food at a reasonable price, where we made everything from scratch including our own dressing. Fresh food at great value,” Stewart says. The original hamburger with fries and coleslaw cost \$9 and now goes for \$25.

The menu has an array of options from appetizers like chicken wings and crab cake sliders to a Cobb salad, half-chicken with

baked potato, fish and chips, and spaghetti and meatballs. Two of my friends, who don’t live in the neighborhood, but liked dining there became known as “fish and chips” and “half chicken” because of their preference for always ordering those entrees.

One of its first regulars, Dorie Levine who lived down the block in a Jane Street pent-house, sometimes invited the other barflies there for food. Her photo is on the walls, though she died several years ago.

Stewart, because of his bartending background, has a knack for remembering names, making everyone feel welcome and encouraging that *Cheers*-like atmosphere. Scores of couples have met at the Tavern on the Jane bar, gotten married, and now bring their children and grandkids there to show them the spot where they shared their first draft beers or glasses of wine.

And Stewart treats his employees well, ex-

emplified by Michael Huston, a server and sometimes stand-up comic, Hugo Amador, long-time chef, and Ernesto Rocha, the porter, working there for circa 20 years.

There are two TVs atop the bar where regulars come in to check on the Yankee, Mets, Rangers, Knicks, Giants, and Jets games. But Stewart emphasizes, “We’re not a sports bar and we didn’t want the TVs to be the main focus.”

The room in the back, which can accommodate about 24 people, has been the space for private get-togethers where guests organize birthday parties, bridal and wedding showers as well as Christenings, and memorial services. It’s where the local morning klatsch from nearby coffeeshop Bonsignour has its annual holiday party.

In the near future, Stewart expects to meet with the landlord and negotiate another 10-year lease to keep Tavern on Jane in the flow. “I’d like to continue what I’m doing for another 10 years,” he says, hinting that this lease could wrap up his tenure, which would then be 40-years.

Stewart tried to expand when he opened Sister Jane in the East Village in 2017 as another local eatery, but the pandemic led to an early 2020 closing. It reopened as Hermana, a Mexican restaurant, before the recurring effects of the pandemic slowdown led to its demise. Prior to that, he once owned Tavern on Dean in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn from 2000 until 2010.

But Stewart admits that keeping a neighborhood eatery going has gotten harder in the last few years. “Costs have risen so much, and rent is higher, so it’s tougher keeping the tradition we’ve had for years alive,” he says.

Asked the secrets to Tavern on Jane’s 30-year legacy, Stewart replied, “1) Treat people the way they like to be treated. 2) Keep the food consistent and provide quality food at a moderate price. 3) Keep all of the employees satisfied, because “the staff is an extension of myself,” Stewart cites. And one thing he left out: knowing the names of as many regulars as possible.

THE PINT-SIZED PALATE – A KID’S TAKE ON NEW YORK FOOD

One Farm, Two Farm, RedFarm, Blue Farm

BY CHURCHILL STONE

REDFARM, 529 HUDSON ST. (AT CHARLES ST.)

A few weeks ago (on a school night) my mom picked me up from ballet and said, “Hey, let’s go out for dinner. Where do you want to go?”

It was almost 8 p.m. so I was a little surprised. “Hmm,” I said, and then it popped into my head, “RedFarm!” I knew the restaurant had finally reopened six months ago after they had a fire.

When we arrived, it was very full. They have an upstairs and a downstairs – both with a bar and very long tables in the middle of the room. Each room is very nice. After 20 minutes, two seats opened up at the bar so they put us there. Is a 10-year old allowed to sit at a bar?

Actually, it was fun sitting at the bar. It’s not easy because you’re very high up and your feet dangle. You have to look sideways to talk to the person you’re with. And there are other people sitting near you – some look bored, but some can be fun and funny. Plus, you get to watch David and Roberto (the bartenders) making all these cool drinks, cocktails and mocktails. My mother said she wanted to come back sometime to try their cocktails because they looked so good. The bartenders, who were super nice, are your servers and they are always right there if you have a question or want something.

I asked for a Shirley Temple. A few moments later, they asked me if it was okay to use cherry juice since they did not have grenadine. Honestly, it tasted the exact same if not much better. Next time, I will ask for a Basil Peach Cobbler mocktail (they have other ones too.)

RedFarm has Chinese food. I think the name is probably



IF YOU’RE AT THE BAR, you have the best seat in town. *Photo by Webster Stone.*

from the Chinese flag which is red and their food is super fresh, like it just came from a farm. But RedFarm is not like a normal Chinese restaurant in Chinatown—it is kind of its own thing.

So, first, we had Five Flavor Chicken Dumplings. OMG, they are so good. I think they might be one of my favorite

dishes there (and they have a lot of good dishes!) The dumplings came looking like a salad so my mom and I got worried. But we soon realized that the dumplings were simply under lettuce. Whew!

The Spicy Crispy Beef was also amazing. It was not too spicy at all, just sweet which I think is very kid friendly. My mom said it tasted like candy, but she ate as much as me, so apparently, she liked it just as much as I did. I think my grandma and little sister would love this dish, and maybe even my baby brother!

Next, we had the Pan-Fried Pork Buns. Another incredible dish. The bao bun was so soft and fluffy and the pork on the inside was sweet and delicious with just the right amount of tasty sauce. Also, my mother agreed that it goes perfectly if you are drinking a Shirley Temple.

Now, my mom wanted a rice dish, so we got Applewood Bacon and Egg-Fried Rice. I will admit, it had a lot of vegetables – carrots, broccoli, onions, etc., but they were easy for me to eat. It looks like something kids would never try, but I think they’ll love it like I did.

Now, it was so late that we couldn’t even stay for dessert. But I hear RedFarm has Key Lime pie (which I love), chocolate cake, and their own ice cream sandwiches. I cannot wait to try all of them.

RedFarm is my very first four-star review! I want to bring my whole family to show them how truly good it is. If parents want a place they will love and the kids will love too, RedFarm is it!

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OUR TRUEST NATURES

By Jan Crawford

My friend Jean’s favorite mountain, Algonquin
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But I have never climbed or loved a mountain

I have revered the Mother Ganges
serpentine down the snowy Himalayas

Upon ritual immersion decades ago
the shock of her icy emerald waters
Sweeping me far beyond my grasping self
its structure shattered and for a moment
my being, as elemental as any mountain or river
Seamlessly absorbed into the timeless
far beyond the conditioned self’s concerns

A taste of freedom before reflexively returning
to focus again on real and phantom dangers
Yet this time with a bit less conviction
this old role is really necessary or desired
So as I await the next or final opening,
please tell me, what do you love?

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VILLAGE PET PAGES

BY JOY PAPE AND BRIAN PAPE

The Story of Grover, A Rescued Beagle

BY ELLIOTT ARNOLD

One early morning, I passed a man walking his dog on Christopher Street, picking up trash on the sidewalk and throwing it in the trash bins. It seemed they were street cleaning together. I thanked him for doing this for our community and he said, “Why not take care of where we live?” I was touched and thought our community should know more about Elliott and Grover. Here’s what he had to say. —Joy Pape

Owning a beagle has been a dream of mine for some time. I fell in love with the breed during the pandemic. An online semester of college and my boyfriend-at-the-time’s remote job meant that we could forgo a typical New England winter (for me) and Seattle winter (for him) for the deserts of Palm Springs, California. Our crucial companion on this trip was my boyfriend’s beagle, Ripley, who spent three months with us hiking in the desert, navigating a post-pandemic world, and baking in the sun. During this time I learned just how charming, devilish, cute, cunning, smart, and attitude-heavy a beagle can be. I look for that attitude in a dog.

After moving to New York City to begin school at NYU Law and living alone for the first time, the moment had come to finally realize this dream. I knew that I wanted to rescue a beagle as opposed to purchasing one, as the breed is notoriously used for experimentation and often abandoned after hunting season.

Grover came into my life on January 11 at 4:45 a.m. He is a tough puppy and his story is a testament to the power that comes from a strong will to survive.



GROVER AT HOME in his West Village apartment. Credit: Elliott Arnold.

He was a stray placed in a kill shelter and eventually discovered by Last Chance Animal Rescue to be transported to an animal sanctuary, all before he turned one. He was scheduled to be driven from South Carolina to the Last Chance headquarters in Long Island. Because I’m originally from New Jersey, where my dad still lives, I arranged a more central pick-up location: the Grover Cleveland Service Area on the northbound side of the NJ Turnpike (I-95).

A slow-moving snowstorm traveling upwards from North Carolina meant delayed travel. While pickup was originally sched-

uled for 12 a.m., Grover did not arrive until more than four hours later. Waiting with my dad, who graciously decided to accompany me, I knew immediately that Grover had arrived when a white van pulled into the rest stop just shy of 5 a.m.

In the most suspicious fashion imaginable, Grover and a handful of other rescue animals arrived in a nondescript white van — a surreal but fitting end to his journey north. The next moments still feel like a haze, perhaps due to the flurries of snow that turned an exciting night into something quietly magical. I walked up to the van. The

driver opened the door. He pointed to Grover and asked, “Is this one yours?” I nodded. He opened the crate, I pulled Grover into my arms, and just like that he entered my life and found his forever home.

Since parts of his story will always be a mystery to me (I wonder how he survived alone on the street as a young puppy), I wanted to memorialize this moment as an integral part of a new chapter in his life. Before long, I landed on Grover’s name (at the time, Dorito); it comes from that moment at the Grover Cleveland rest stop.

Since moving to the West Village and leaving behind his southern roots, Grover has adjusted to city life quite well. He loves Hudson River Park and is a ferocious walker. Our daily routine involves heading to the Christopher Street Pier and then walking about 1.5 miles north to Little Island, which is close to his favorite dog park. He has been a great companion as I explore this new neighborhood. He loves to be outdoors, taking in his neighbors, the trees, the birds, and all the stimuli New York City has to offer. His favorite shop is Wooftown, where he loves to splurge on squeaky tennis balls, air-dried fish, and duck hearts. During the day, he spends his time at Biscuits & Bath, where he is considered one of the top five most energetic dogs. Thankfully, his friend, Callie, gives him a run for his money.

If you see us out for a walk, please say hi! Grover loves to meet new people. However, golf carts, skateboards, street cleaning trucks, and wheeled vehicles beware! You may be met with the notorious beagle bark-yell-scream-howl combination.

Keaton *continued from page 15*

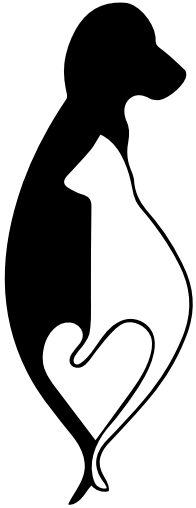
Like many creative people, Diane yearned to return home. She left her mark on Manhattan, where she lived on the Upper West Side, and returned to California to be closer to her family. She became a Hollywood actress and did some interesting work but none, in my opinion, as inspired as what she did in New York. When the roles and calls stopped coming she retired to cultivate her garden, to write her memoirs and to give back to her country. Diane was involved in restoring Beverly Hills mansions and hotels like the Ambassador where the late Robert Kennedy was murdered. In many ways she became like Kate Hepburn, a reclusive actress living out her final days.

It’s not easy to be an actress in this world. You are either too young or too old. Too fat or too skinny. It should be noted that Diane Keaton, in her 79 years, continued to

work as an actress in the Hollywood business for over 50 years. During her last few years, however, she preferred to spend time with her adopted children. She was a photographer and continued to take beautiful pictures.

Diane was brought up by parents who were religious. When she died, she was not religious at all, though she played a nun in *Sister Mary Explains It All* and directed a song by Belinda Carlisle called *Heaven is a Place on Earth*. That’s the life of an actress, pretending to be something you are not most of the time. And sometimes, like she did in a series of films with Woody Allen, she played roles that might have been closer to who and what she was.

Woody Allen described Diane as “unlike anyone the planet has experienced or is unlikely to ever see again.”



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THE HONOR OF CO-NAMED STREETS

Reggie Fitzgerald Triangle

BY BRIAN PAPE

People have been honored here in New York with co-naming of streets or places for them. Look for the special green signs below the regular street signs and check out Honorary street names.



REGGIE FITZGERALD TRIANGLE, center, has been enhanced by the pedestrian extended sidewalks on West 4th Street at the right, and Horatio Street on the left, looking south toward Eighth Avenue. The signpost with the Reggie Fitzgerald Triangle nameplate is at the far right on another divider island. Credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.

Reggie Fitzgerald Triangle is bounded by Horatio Street, West 4th Street, and Eighth Avenue. The honoree, Reggie Fitzgerald (1929-1995), was a community leader in Greenwich Village and the owner of a clothing store on West 4th Street. He was a long-time member and officer of the Horatio Street Association who helped organize residents into night patrols in cooperation with the 6th Precinct. As an active member on Community Board 2, he chaired its Traffic and Transportation Committee, was an advocate for historic preservation, and served on the Gay and Lesbian Committee. The co-naming was designated by City Council in 1997.

This diminutive traffic island along busy Eighth Avenue has been improved and expanded in recent years. It now features a landscaped center with bench seating, ex-

panded sidewalks marked by street borders on two sides, and a protected bike path on the Eighth Avenue side. The pedestrian area on Horatio now takes up the entire street, cutting off vehicle traffic, and providing tables and chairs on nice days. The small town-house storefronts facing Horatio provide a quiet background.

Only Horatio fits into the city grid here, since both 4th Street and Eighth Avenue run diagonally to the grid and intersect just below 13th Street (only in the Village could 4th Street intersect with 13th Street).

To make it even more bizarre, the sign for Reggie Fitzgerald Triangle isn’t located on its triangle, but on the bike lane island just south of it. Don’t let that stop you from enjoying this little respite along the busy streets of the Village.

Downtown Roundup *continued from page 3*

GREENWICH HOUSE MUSIC SCHOOL SEEKS NEW HOME

Greenwich House has officially launched a search for a new, accessible home for its Music School, exploring the sale of its current building at 46 Barrow Street. While the connection to the 120-year-old building remains, limitations like a lack of ADA accessibility, outdated infrastructure, and rising maintenance costs have hindered the school’s programmatic flexibility as well as who can access its offerings. This move is a proactive step to secure the school’s long-term legacy and ensure its high-quality programming remains affordable and accessible for the next 100 years. The school’s education and community programs are expected to continue without interruption in the Bar-

row Street building through June 2026.

This decision presents a unique, once-in-a-century opportunity to reimagine a new space that truly reflects the school’s values of inclusion, creativity, and community. The Greenwich House Board is prioritizing securing a new home in or near the school’s original neighborhood in the West Village and expanding access programs, rehearsal space, and artist support. Students, families, artists, and faculty will be engaged throughout this collaborative process to help inform the future of the new space. For more information about the search and to follow updates, please visit greenwichhouse.org/new-chapter.

My Graduation from Physical Therapy

BY NANCY DAVIDOFF KELTON

A few weeks ago, I graduated from physical therapy after six months of treatment for sciatica. Now, except for getting out of bed in the morning, standing up quickly from a chair, or stepping down from the curb, which often gave me a quick sharp pain in my spine, I am fine. When I stretch before getting out of bed in the morning, once in bed for the night, and when I keep my tummy and buttocks tucked in when I walk, I don’t have spinal problems.

I have had physical therapy three times before; once for a more severe case of sciatica, another for a foot issue, and a third for a torn meniscus. I went to the same facility twice. One of those times, my husband was having therapy at the same center for a shoulder issue. We had the same therapist. Sometimes we scheduled our appointments at the same time and were next to each other. If we talked, I would initiate the conversation which was usually about what to eat for dinner and at what restaurant.

With my recent physical therapy sessions, I often reached out to nearby patients. Some did not wish to talk. Some did. I spoke with people who were doing the same stretches I was doing; some also had sciatica, others were recovering from falls or knee or hip replacement surgery. I spoke to a man who is a theater buff. I complimented a woman on her hair and asked her where she had it cut. I wanted to go to the same stylist. “No, you don’t,” she said. “It’s a wig. I have had four types of cancer.” She laughed when she said that. I told her we need not talk about it anymore. She said she would like to. We spoke at length and quite easily.

Physical therapy has been social. In ways, it has been more useful than mental therapy. I have not been in regular mental therapy for years. My last regular psychotherapist died eight months ago. I consulted two others since then: once in person to discuss my last psychotherapist’s death. I found her office cold. Drab. Unwelcoming. I found her the same way. I then had four Facetime sessions with another psychotherapist. During the third session, he was eating. Obviously too. Chowing down. That offended me. I told him so, reminding him that I was supposed

to be his focus. He apologized and said he had had eight hours of sessions and had not eaten all day. Oh my gosh! That was not my business. At our fourth session I asked him why he kept glancing elsewhere instead of keeping his eyes on me. He explained his office was on the first floor of his country house and he wanted to check and see if the pool man or the gardener was coming. That did it. I ended my time with him. Plus, I was dealing with my sciatica and in between physical therapy sessions and stretching at home, it seemed downright ridiculous that I had to hear about my psychotherapist’s needs.

I love the physical therapy facility where I was recently treated. I liked my previous physical therapist, but she retired and the facility closed down. The second facility was like a Marx Brothers movie without humor. The therapists ran around talking with each other more than to their patients or did not know much about their ailments. I left.

My recent therapist, Paul, was knowledgeable, experienced, kind, gentle, reassuring, and funny. He gave me stretches to do at home, urged me to continue doing plank poses, and answered my questions thoroughly and simply. He introduced me to his assistants and to the other physical therapists who pitched in and helped. The receptionists were very friendly and accommodating.

These sessions in a friendly, well-run center, the use of a heating pad on my back and the contacts were great. I was afraid to leave. Paul thought I could stop weeks before I did, reminding me I could always come back if needed.

I am doing my stretches at home. I walk regularly, slower and for shorter distances. I go to the gym which I have not done for a while. My recent stint with physical therapy has been better than my recent stints with mental therapy.

For now, my time with both is up.

The Village View does not endorse specific medical advice, but is rather sharing one person’s experience. Work with your health care provider to choose the best path for you.



AUTHOR NANCY KELTON using the exercise ball. Photo by Jonathan Zich.

Mingus Dynasty on Fire at Zinc Bar

BY KAJU ROBERTO



Walking south in my Chelsea neighborhood along Seventh Avenue South, I swiftly passed the new Northwell Hospital without taking much notice on my way to the oldest jazz club in NYC, the Village Vanguard.

Twenty-three Taiwanese ladies from NATWA (the North American Taiwanese Women’s Association), most of whom were visiting the Big Apple for the first time, were now waiting patiently for me under the famous Vanguard awning.

This would be our ground zero meeting place to embark upon a unique NYC experience I planned for them that they could not likely get elsewhere in America. Thus, I felt a tremendous burden of responsibility, and I didn’t want to ruin their first trip to New York City ever, much less the Village!

This all happened on Friday, October 17, the first date of my inaugural *Historic Greenwich Village Jazz Walking Tour*. Originally set for October 18, to my delight it turned out that the date being changed to the 17th would be very serendipitous.

The famous Mingus Dynasty band had established a new residency with one of my favorite Greenwich Village jazz clubs, Zinc Bar, every third Friday of the month. Incredibly, they just happened to be playing at Zinc Bar on October 17! Jackpot!

Mingus Dynasty is an American jazz ensemble formed in 1979 by Charles Mingus’ widow Sue Mingus, just after his death. Mingus is considered one of the greatest jazz musicians of the 20th century. He was a renowned double bassist, pianist, composer, activist, and author.

The band has featured many musicians Mingus recorded or played with. Over 46 years, there still remains three Mingus repertory groups: Mingus Dynasty, Mingus Big Band and the Mingus Orchestra. All three have toured extensively worldwide and until only recently, made a “home” on Monday



TOP PHOTO: Mingus Dynasty performs at Zinc Bar on October 17. INSET: Rad Jet’s Historic Jazz Walking Tour with the Mingus Dynasty at Zinc Bar. Photos by Kaju Roberto.

nights at DROM in New York.

We barely made it to Zinc Bar on time, but the owner was waiting for us. Somehow, they squeezed in 23 ladies and myself altogether in chairs and banquette seating.

Mingus Dynasty Hits Hard

Mingus Dynasty is a band where every single member is a decorated world class musician. The talent and experience on that stage at Zinc Bar was staggering.

Their set started fast and furious, with the band’s incendiary version of Mingus’ *Gunslinging Bird*, a song that pays homage to the late great alto saxophonist and one of the fathers of jazz improvisation, Charlie Parker.

As Grammy Award-winning tenor saxophonist and band leader for the evening Wayne Escoffery said shortly of the song, “The real full length title is ‘If Charlie Parker were a gunslinger, there would be a lot of dead copycats!’”

Mingus wrote many pieces to honor musicians he revered and respected. However, he also wrote pieces to dishonor and remind us of atrocities that happened during his time.

The second piece the band played was Mingus’ protest piece called *Fables of Faubus* to dishonor the Governor of Arkansas who in 1957 called out the National Guard

to prevent the racial integration of schools. Mingus was a dedicated activist and was highly vocal towards the good and bad acts of the world around him.

Parts swung really hard, while others sounded satirical and even whimsical. The most noticeable “glue” of this piece were the band members’ vocal chants throughout the song. Brandon Wright on alto sax, and Tatum Greenblatt on trumpet both went off on exploratory solos.

The third song was Mingus’ beautiful ballad *Portrait* featuring the great trombonist Conrad Herwig who played a breath-taking, gorgeous solo. His beautiful yet precise rapid-fire fluttering of notes and total command of tone certainly makes him one of the best trombonists on the planet.

Their acclaimed pianist, Helen Sung, began the piece with a cascading introduction so splendid that it transported me to a peaceful place depicting a beautiful “portrait.” It is no wonder Sung has won many prestigious awards, notably the Kennedy Center’s Mary Lou Williams Jazz Piano Competition.

The last piece played was Mingus’ exuberant multi-layered *Three or Four Shades of Blue* where Wayne Escoffery began in a tongue-in-cheek manner reciting 11 specific instructions by Mingus of how to play the blues!

After a whipping start, Sung completely diverged by playing a whimsical childlike improvisation solo which soon morphed into ragtime, atonal music, and back to the blues. Her versatility on the instrument is astounding.

Mark Lewandowsky on the double bass filled those Mingus double bass shoes nicely, by playing swingin’ lines while Sung continued playing the blues. The entire band came in swingin’, but quickly Lewandowsky switched to an Afro-Cuban rhythm!

Everyone on the bandstand had a chance to solo on this piece. Long-time drummer and veteran of the Mingus Big Band, Adam Cruz, got to solo too.

Wayne Escoffery had been holding back until the end all along. When it was his time to go, he simply “blew the doors off” with this fluttering in-and-out Byrd-like solo, at times fast angular lines, then returning home. What also really impressed me is how effective Escoffery was as a band leader.

End of the Night

After Mingus Dynasty’s flaming set had ended, Escoffery and the entire band were super nice, and allowed our entire group to take a photo with the full band after that set, an amazing rare treat for everyone!

I had a chance to speak separately with Herwig and Sung by the bar. That’s when I found out Sung was from Taiwan and introduced her to our 23 Taiwanese ladies on the tour. More photos. What a beautiful ending!

One of the best shows I’ve seen this year, and we were very lucky to have our inaugural Jazz Tour experience it. Thanks to Alex at Zinc Bar for accommodating us.

Kaju Roberto is an accomplished musician, singer/ songwriter, journalist, and an award-winning producer. He is the artist Rad Jet on Spotify.

Requiem for the Cornelia Street Café in Exile

BY ROGER PARADISO

CORNELIA STREET CAFÉ IN EXILE A FILM BY MICHAEL JACOBSON

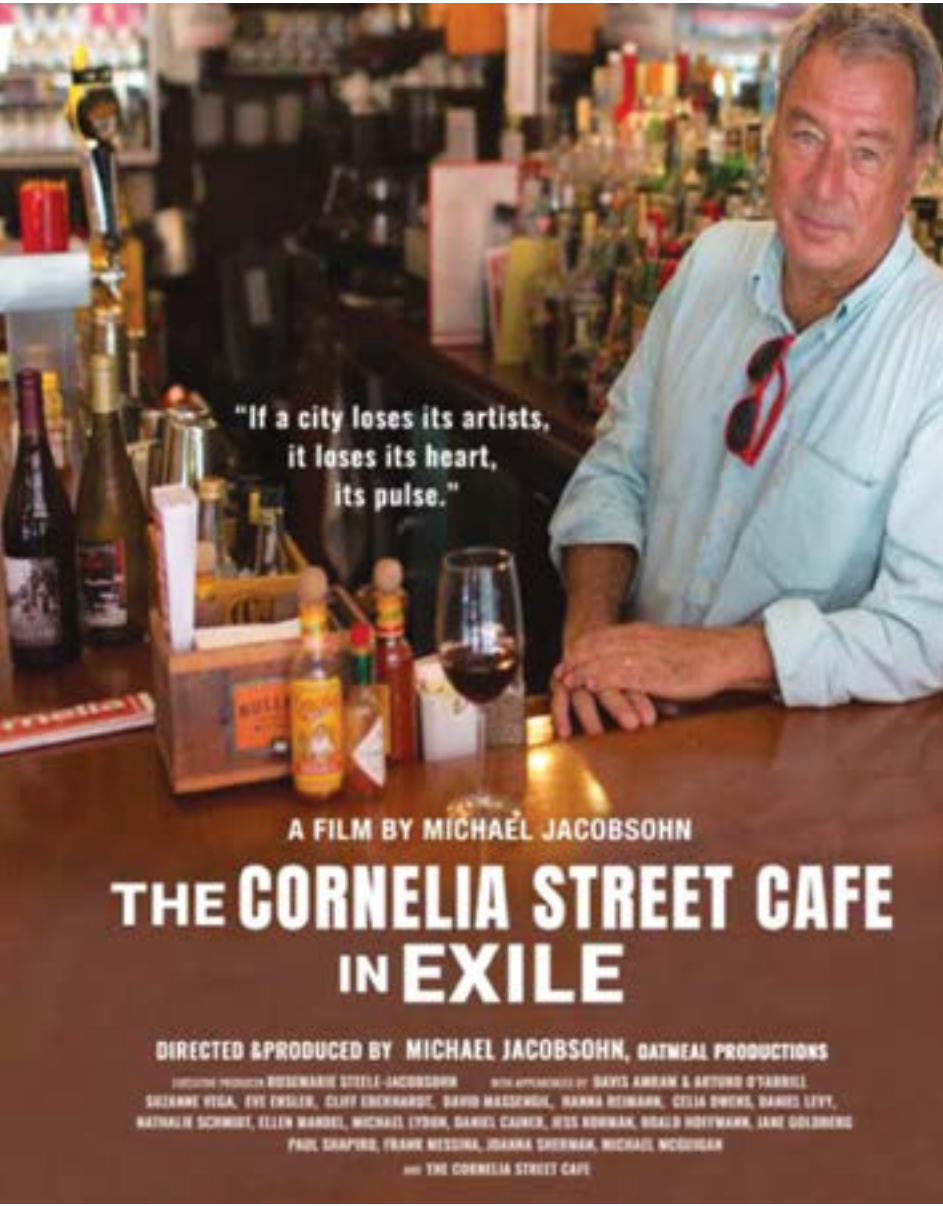
“If a city loses its artists, it loses its heart, its pulse.” - R. Hirsch

The Cornelia Street Café lost its battle with New York City gentrification disease and closed its doors on January 1, 2019. Michael Jacobson has expertly dealt with the crisis by doing a documentary, *The Cornelia Street Café in Exile*. The film is a requiem about the many artists who performed on the tiny stage with red curtains. By sticking close to the songs and words spoken by those artists and Robin Hirsch, one of the three owners, Jacobson creates the world that once existed for 41 years at the Café located near Bleeker Street.

One of the performers sings “Manhattan what happened to you?” Well folks, Manhattan grew old and money hungry. Just take a look at your new Greenwich Village. It’s been through a war of economics which can be quite lethal to peace-loving Villagers. Many clubs, movie theaters and music halls are not around in the new Greenwich Village. That is the sad tale of Cornelia Street. Using a combination of old media film and video, photographs, sound, and footage from the last show, Jacobson transports you to the Cornelia Café.

As Robin said, “We thought we’d celebrate this afternoon the long tradition of songwriting...in 1980 Stash Records did its only non-jazz record called Cornelia Street Exchange. The album still sounds fresh...and you will hear some of those songs today.” The first act of the film is off and running through performers young and old, with archival footage and live performances caught on that last day of the Café -- December 28, 2018.

I remember one evening I was screening my film, *The Lost Village*. I asked Robin to join our discussion and he told us that the Café was closing. His thoughts fit in to what we were saying about *The Lost Village*. The Village was being transformed into Condo World as displaced artists moved to Jersey City or Brooklyn. As we spoke, I heard Robin struggling to let go.



OWNER ROBIN HIRSCH at the Cornelia Street Cafe. Photo by Kevin Hagen.

Later in the film, as we watch the workers tearing apart the Café, we hear the spirits sing in the soundtrack. In a collage of memories, Robin talked ironically about this book, *Last Dance at the Hotel Kempinski*. Robin called the book a mosaic. The main story in act two of the film is about the author still dealing with his parents fleeing Germany during Hitler’s purge of Jews and others including artists.

Robin was born in London during the blitzkrieg of German bombers that were trying to destroy his home. This irony and the juxtaposition of acts one and two is that it brings us some insight as to how Robin might have felt as wrecking crews came to destroy his beloved Café.

Robin’s son, Sascha Hirsch, said, “Without a doubt the Holocaust and the impact on my grandparents ... had an effect on my father my dad did a really good job and was really conscious not to repeat the things he experienced as a kid.”

Clearly, there were emotional scars from the families who escaped Hitler. And somehow, some way these hard experiences led Robin to start a café. Rather than rattle the viewer, this section of the film enhances the experience of the documentary. Jacobson has done well fitting

these mosaic pieces together and that is what documentary filmmaking can do at its highest moments: it connects the small pieces of glass and stone into a mosaic that makes sense to the audience.

For the final act, we see the rebirth of *Cornelia Street Café In Exile*. And that is what many other artists have had to do — move on. The history of Manhattan is that as each neighborhood gentrifies, many mom-and-pop shop owners and artists have to leave because of higher costs. Some go out of business or some move farther out than Manhattan and try again. The *Cornelia Café in Exile* moved on like a Broadway Truck and Bus Tour. They went to the Meatpacking District, created a stage on the plaza and re-created a show based on many of the same acts as Cornelia had done inside its former physical space. We follow the exiled troupe around to other parts of the tour.

And then COVID hits and you have to shut down. What do you do next? You do what other artists and businesses did and are now doing. You zoom your events or your meetings. And that is what Robin does along with his team. They are on the internet in exile. We also see Robin performing by himself and connecting to an audience whether it is live or zoomed. And finally at the end, he seems to come to grips with his loss by performing to friends and audiences. He has found a path that works for him.

Sascha said, “I don’t know why he continues to perform ... I think it brings some kind of joy, some kind of relief and some kind of escape....”

As we watch the credits crawl, we understand how the Cornelia Street Café and its family will survive the loss of a physical building. It will be passing down the poetry, the songs, the films and the memories of a shared experience in a time and place that may still exist in exile. I think the pulse is still there, it’s just maybe a little slower. The patient has survived. And the audience is cheering a somewhat happy ending.

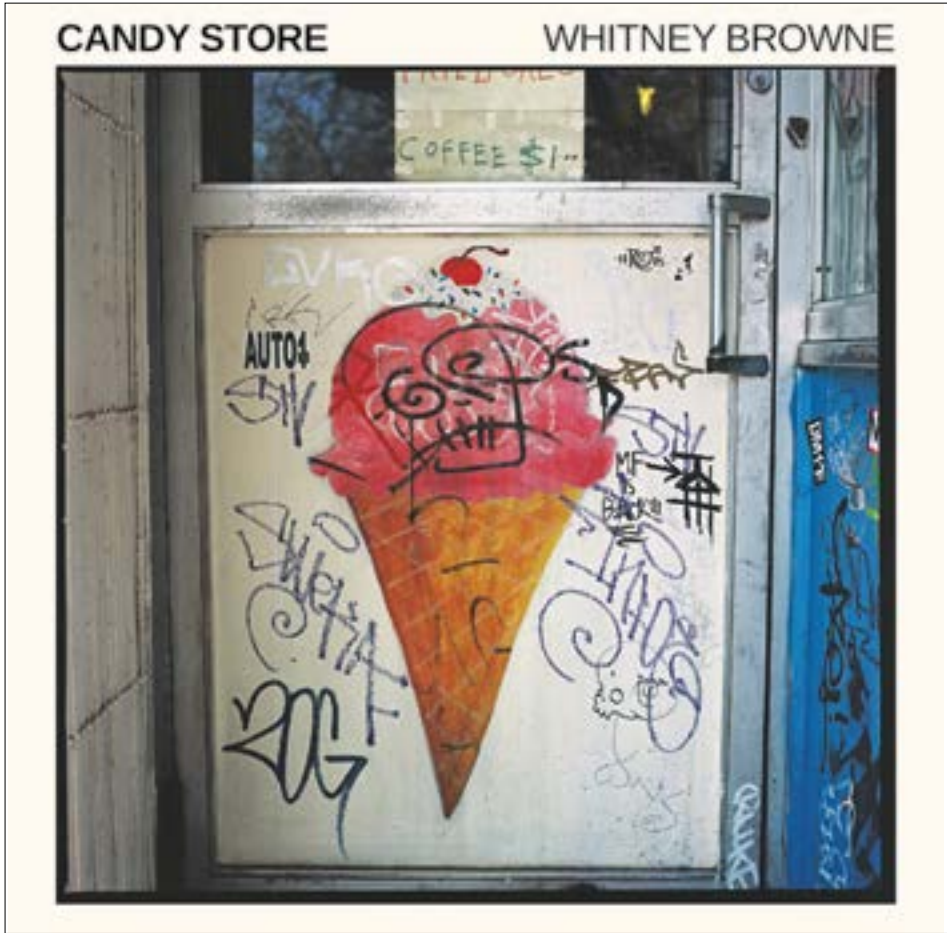
“What good is sitting alone in your room, come let the music play.” Cabaret, music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb.

BOOK REVIEW

Candy Store

A Photographer’s Gorgeous Glimpse Behind the Counter of an Iconic East Village Bodega

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS



BOOK COVER 2024, *Candy Store* by Whitney Browne, proceeds from the book go to Ray.

Photographer Whitney Browne describes her book *Candy Store* as an homage to the disappearing New York City owner-operated storefront, but her artful and idiosyncratic little volume is so much weirder and more wonderful than that. Instead, it’s a testament to the East Village as a welcoming haven for everyone, freaks and outsiders included. And it’s also a stunning example of how freedom and tolerance can spur an artist’s vision, here displayed across 90 pages of lush color photography and compelling text.

For years, Browne found refuge and comfort behind the counter at Ray’s Candy Store, the 24/7 egg cream and fried-Oreo purveyor across the street from Tompkins

Square Park, on the corner of Avenue A and East 7th Street. Browne would come in to work the graveyard shift for free, refusing owner Ray Alvarez’s offers of pay for fear of sullying her experience.

She began to bring her Hasselblad camera with her to work and, from 2012 to 2017, slowly produced the highly personal collection of photographs that ultimately became *Candy Store*. Recently at Tompkins Square Library, Browne gave a talk—and showed images that did and didn’t make it into her book. Left out of the book was a full portrait of a patron in a Magritte-inspired suit and tie of vivid blue sky and white cumulus clouds. Kept in the book was a headless portrait of the same cloud-suit

guy, the image extending from the top of his necktie to just below his crotch—a shot that foregrounds and celebrates the distinctive aesthetic choices he and Browne each made.

Browne credits Ray and his candy store for framing her vision and pulling her through. “I liked being of service to Ray, and knew that being in Ray’s company was helping me out, too,” she writes. “My early-hour volunteerism became an act of self-preservation. It brought me out of my head and into someone else’s hard-earned world....At a time when I felt like there was nowhere to go, he demonstrated the potential of radical imagination in the face of dead ends.”

Indeed, in Browne’s telling, Ray himself is arguably a work of art, a willful creation of “radical imagination.” Browne concludes her book with an interview recounting Ray’s remarkable story. A poetry-loving former Iranian sailor who jumped ship to swim to the Virginia shore, Asghar Ghahraman became Ray Alvarez when he was kindly gifted someone else’s driver’s license. Arriving in New York City nearly penniless, he eventually saved enough to buy his eponymous East Village storefront. In his interview Ray quotes *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* in Farsi and expostulates “I love America!” Now in his nineties, Ray still keeps his candy store open 24/7. Dare I suggest he is not your typical store owner?

Yes, owner-operated storefronts are special and should be cherished and saved. But *Candy Store*, the book, and Ray’s Candy Store, the bodega, also speak to the power of perseverance and “radical imagination.” They embody and transmogrify the joy, heart, and perversity of the East Village.

Though I have far too many books, I felt compelled to purchase this one, and it continues to obsess me. Profits after expenses will support Ray. *Candy Store* would make a great holiday gift for your favorite bohemian, and is available locally from Village Works, Mast Books, the Strand, and Book Club Bar.



MAMA, 2014 *Candy Store*, Image by Whitney Browne.



LILIN LACE performing at Ray’s Birthday 2016, *Candy Store*, Image by Whitney Browne.



SKY SUIT, 2015 *Candy Store*, Image by Whitney Browne.

BEYOND THE GLOBAL GLITZ

Finding New York’s Heart at the NY Film Festival

BY MICHAEL JACOBSON



MR. SCORSESE FILM POSTER

Film at Lincoln Center recently held the 63rd edition of the New York Film Festival (NYFF63). The festival’s identity revolves around its Main Slate, which this year featured a curated selection of 34 feature films. Strikingly, the festival continuously manages to fill the 1,000-seat Alice Tully Hall with enthusiastic audiences willing to purchase tickets that start at \$35.

The Main Slate selection was overwhelmingly comprised of international titles, cherry-picked by the festival organizers from a grand circuit of global film festivals: the Festival de Cannes, the Venice International Film Festival, Berlinale, Toronto International Film Festival, and the Sundance Film Festival. NYFF programmers take pride that their selections serve as a showcase of the season’s most significant international films, continuing a tradition since 1963 of introducing audiences to what they deem are bold works from both celebrated masters and newly emerging talents. Tucked within this international bounty were three films strongly rooted in New York City. This is my take on those films.

Late Fame, directed by Kent Jones, offers a genuinely compelling New York narrative. It stars Willem Dafoe as a character who, we discover, has spent most of his adult life working as a postman. Set in present-day Greenwich Village, the story is quirky, easily identifiable, and sweet in its premise.

Elderly artists, like me, will profoundly identify with Dafoe’s life-altering journey. Imagine withdrawing from the competitive, non-paying Village art scene of the ’70s and accepting a ‘bread and butter’ job at the post office for 38 years, only to be suddenly informed by a boyish cadre of well-heeled NYU student poets that a poetry collection you published nearly half a century ago is an unrecognized masterpiece that needs to

be brought back to life. Would you trade your anonymity and longtime neighborhood friends for some late fame?

How compelling is that proposition? An artistic passion you had long abandoned is unexpectedly unearthed by outsiders, and you are given the recognition you had thought lost forever. Not only that, but these young poets, captivated by your early verses, urge you to publish new works. The conclusion of this late-in-life ‘dream come true’ carries unwelcome truth. I am confident this fine film will secure distribution, ensuring that many of you will have the chance to see it.

Mr. Scorsese is a five-part documentary series which was directed by Rebecca

Scorsese will be forever linked with New York’s Little Italy neighborhood, having been raised on Elizabeth Street and focusing his early works on the sights and sounds he witnessed as a child and a young man. The first episode directly addresses Scorsese’s

present family members who illuminate the turbulent, “roller coaster” existence of life with a singular, dedicated artist. These impressive documentary episodes are currently available on Apple TV+.

Father Mother Sister Brother. Film-maker Jim Jarmusch contributed greatly to the cinematic style that emerged from New York’s Lower East Side’s vibrant and eclectic counterculture of the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, his latest film, *Father Mother Sister Brother*, did not work for me. The story is divided into three unrelated chapters, each set in a different country and centered on adult children reconnecting with their emotionally distant parents—or struggling with their absence. The film features many headline actors who deliver their lines skillfully, yet their performances feel overly restrained, offering little emotional range or depth to connect with. The film played more like a documentary chronicling the quiet disconnection of our time, but unfortunately, it didn’t translate into a compelling cinematic experience for me. You can judge for yourself when MUBI releases the film theatrically in late December.



NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL 63 POSTER

With no shame, New York Film Festival’s staff jet around the world, so they can attend the most elite film festivals. And to my dismay, they then choose the 34 films that they deem worthy to screen at the Main Slate of the festival. On top of that, having to pay a minimum of \$35 to attend a film screening deprives many New Yorkers the opportunity to become familiar with the festival’s lineup. Instead of accumulating frequent miles, the programmers of the New York Film Festival would be well served to look in their own backyard and consider scheduling some deserving New York filmmakers who can use a bit of fame.

The comprehensive series walks us chronologically through Scorsese’s colossal filmography. We are given the unique opportunity to hear directly from Scorsese, his childhood friends, and a multitude of major actors and collaborators who have driven these projects forward. Scorsese has directed approximately 60 films to date, from his low-budget NYU thesis film *Who’s That Knocking at My Door* to his most recent historical epic, *Killers of the Flower Moon*. While the sheer number of films is remarkable, we also learn that this immense success came with a significant personal price. Now in his fifth marriage, Scorsese provides Miller access to interviews with past and

Miller. The project is an immense cinematic achievement. Martin Scorsese granted the filmmaker unfettered access to his personal history, yielding an in-depth understanding of the forces that have sustained his directorial fame for more than half a century.



LATE FAME FILM POSTER

Where do I find THE Village View?

- PLEASE VISIT THESE LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR COPIES OF THE PAPER**
- Caffe Reggio
 - Center for Architecture
 - Cinema Village
 - Ferdi Homey Italian Cuisine
 - Golden Wok
 - Greenwich Village Animal Hospital
 - Hudson Park Library
 - Integral Yoga Institute

- Jefferson Market Library
- Kettle of Fish
- La Lanterna di Vittorio Restaurant
- Northwell Greenwich Village Hospital
- Lilac-The Chocolate Store
- Mercer Street Books
- Player’s Theater
- The Red Lion
- Village Revival Records
- Washington Square Hotel

ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE villageview.nyc



Poets of Patchin Place: Village Poets Set to Music

BY KAJU ROBERTO



BARITONE COMPOSER NEHEMIAH LUCKETT at *Poets of Patchin Place*, a musical setting for Village poets. Photo Kaju Roberto.

Poets of Patchin Place was a unique event of musical settings of Village Poets. It was held at Salmagundi Arts Club on September 24 and was part of The Village Trip festival in collaboration with Welltone New Music, Cutting Edge Concerts, and The Coffee House Club.

The musical poetry event was separated into two parts with a 20 minute intermission. Most of the pieces were played on piano, guitar, harp, and mandolin.

Eight Rhythms

The opening piece called *Eight Rhythms* was composed by music director William Anderson. Anderson’s *Djuna Barnes Settings* were commissioned by Zaidee Parkinson in 2015.

This entire work was composed of eight poems in six songs, with the first and fifth songs set to two poems at once. The cycle appears on the Furious Artisans CD, *Der Weg Ins Feie*. The original version featured a theorbo, but for this performance it was replaced by a harp.

This night’s instrumentation featured Sharon Harms, soprano, William Anderson on mandolin, Oren Fader on guitar, and June Han on harp.

Barnes once called her poems “rhythms,” therefore two songs are polyrhythmic. In her novel *Ryder*, and no less in her short stories, Barnes takes comfort in animals. This cycle treats a panoply of Barnes’ primal scenes and arch double-takes, in rhythm, before concluding with animals in “pastoral.”

This multi-layered piece composed by Anderson is contemporary classical music with interesting dissonances, harmonics, and exotic sounding intervals, showcasing the brilliant guitar work by Fader. Anderson and Han complimented on their respective instruments very nicely. Lyrically, Harms emphasized “animals” such as cats, frogs, and horses.

Leopold Bloom’s Homecoming

The second piece, Leopold Bloom’s *Homecoming* composed by internationally acclaimed composer and conductor Victoria Bond, is a technically demanding yet hilarious, dry and factual dramatic and operatic treatment (sung and acted by Michael Kelly, baritone) with an external narrator (played and acted by accompanying pianist John Arida) asking questions.

The work was inspired by Molly Bloom’s monologue at the end of the book *Ulysses* where Bond first composed a work called *Molly ManyBloom*. The current work is part of a larger plan to set other sections of the book as separate works.

Bond set many of the passages as recitative or spoken in rhythm, which Kelly executed very well with both vocal power and comedy. The best way this mood could be described is Kelly’s first line after the piano introduction begins -

He kissed the plump, mellow yellow, smell-o, mellow rump!

Kelly continues with a series of humorous -ation rhymes – some of which are not even words in the English dictionary — after pia-

nist John Adria narrates the sentence “the visible signs of post satisfaction.”

In an operatic voice Kelly replies with powerful words such as contemplation, elation, recog-nation, excitation, modification, interrogation, erection, and ejaculation!

This was indeed a powerful operatic yet tongue-in-cheek vocal performance by Kelly and Adria.

Chansons Innocentes

Part Two of the program began with *Chansons Innocentes*. This piece was composed by Laura Schwendinger, composer of *Artemisa*, and the winner of the 2023 American Academy of Arts and Letters Opera Award.

The Chansons Innocentes are dedicated to Dawn Upshaw who performed *In Just-Spring* in her Carnegie Hall debut in 1997 and subsequently recorded it for a TDK Naxos DVD, *Voice of Our Time*.

Chansons Innocentes featured Zoe Allen, soprano and Christopher Allen on piano.

Oceans Always Lead to Some Great Good Place

The final piece of the night was composed by Nehemiah Luckett called *Oceans Always Lead to Some Great Good Place*. Inspired by James Baldwin’s *Another Country*, this piece has four vignettes, where the composer claims that for each he draws upon Baldwin’s texts as both anchor and compass.

Luckett is a composer working at the intersection of sacred and secular music. For

over 30 years he has performed, composed, music directed, and conducted in genres ranging from pop/rock to choral and orchestral pieces.

On this night baritone Luckett performed his own composition vocally. Music director William Anderson accompanied on electric guitar with Joan Forsyth on piano. This piece was commissioned by The Village Trip for the James Baldwin Centennial.

The first vignette, *Stranger*, is a brooding piece where the protagonist repeatedly pleads in a somber voice, “I’m a stranger, don’t drive me away.”

The second vignette *What Were Their Terrors* is a contemplative poem set to music where Luckett speaks the words while the music played on piano vacillates between somber modern classical music and jazz.

The third vignette *A Wall Between Them and the World* begins with a single guitar line by Anderson. Luckett here is once again singing. The piano and guitar interplay lines in a call/response and then the vignette concludes with quizzical dissonances.

The fourth and final vignette *A Vast and Friendly Ocean* is hymn-like where Luckett powerfully sings completely in archipelago. This last vignette clearly showcased Luckett’s powerful and rich baritone voice and thus received the biggest ovation of the evening.

Kaju Roberto is an accomplished musician, singer/ songwriter, journalist, and an award-winning producer. He is the artist *Rad Jet* on *Spotify*.

Jefferson Market: From Prison Walls to Public Garden

BY CORINNE NEARY

We are thrilled to announce our new exhibit, *Before We Had a Garden: An Archival History of the Women’s House of Detention Site, and What Came Before and After*. This exhibit, up now through mid-December in our Little Underground Gallery, is the first of what we hope will be many sourced entirely from our library archive, and put together by us, your librarians.

About the exhibit: The Jefferson Market Garden celebrated its 50th anniversary this fall. Longtime residents of Greenwich Village will remember that before we had a garden, on its site stood the Women’s House of Detention, which was opened in 1931, and demolished in 1973, having stood vacant for two years.

However, this was not the first jail on this land. A police court and jail stood there, an annex to the original Jefferson Market structure, beginning in 1849. When the Jefferson Market Courthouse, which is now Jefferson Market Library, was erected in 1877 a red brick structure that held a jail was attached, standing behind this building, where the garden is now. The prison was five stories high and had 96 cells — 64 in four tiers for men and 32 in two tiers for women. That structure was demolished in 1929, to make way for the then state-of-the-art Women’s House of Detention.

In this exhibit, with original materials sourced entirely from our library archive, the complicated history of this site is further explored, as well as the role of the community in shaping its future. The garden, originally designed by Pamela Berdan, came to be despite numerous other plans for the site, including a library extension, a New School annex and a neighborhood arts center. The story is told here, through original correspondence,



VIEW FROM 1 CHRISTOPHER STREET after the Women’s House of Detention demolition. Photo by Terence McCarten.

building plans, library design sketches and never before seen personal photographs.

Exhibit highlights include extensive capital planning documents showing the projected cost in 1973 for the library annex building, as well as the proposed needs of the library at the time. Jefferson Market’s original library manager, Phillip Gerrard, wrote a proposal which includes lounges for smoking and typing, as well as a theater with raised seating for an audience of 200. There is also a booklet containing blueprints for another proposed project: a neighborhood arts center designed by Giorgio Cavaglieri, the architect responsible for our library conversion.

Original garden-related items on display include Pamela Berdan’s sketches for the space, as well as itemized pricing lists for the original garden planting. On the more personal side, Berdan’s snapshots of her gardens and her beloved cat, as well as friends, are included. I would be remiss if I neglected to mention some of the changes made to the garden since 1999, when horticulturalist Susan Sipos took over the plantings and design. Where there was once a gravel path, we now have a brick walkway to ensure ease of access. The garden did not originally have an open lawn as a centerpiece, but an area full of shrubs and ivy, which was not pleasing to the eye. We also have Sipos to thank for the rose garden, and the larger pond, now home to a family of frogs.

When you visit the exhibit in our basement gallery, please note that it begins in the curved brick walled vestibule at the foot of the spiral staircase. Here we have installed a timeline for those interested in how the space has changed over the years since the market was first built in 1849.



HALLOWEEN DECORATIONS WERE UP around the Village in October including these imaginative skeletons. Photos by Anthony Paradiso.

November 2025

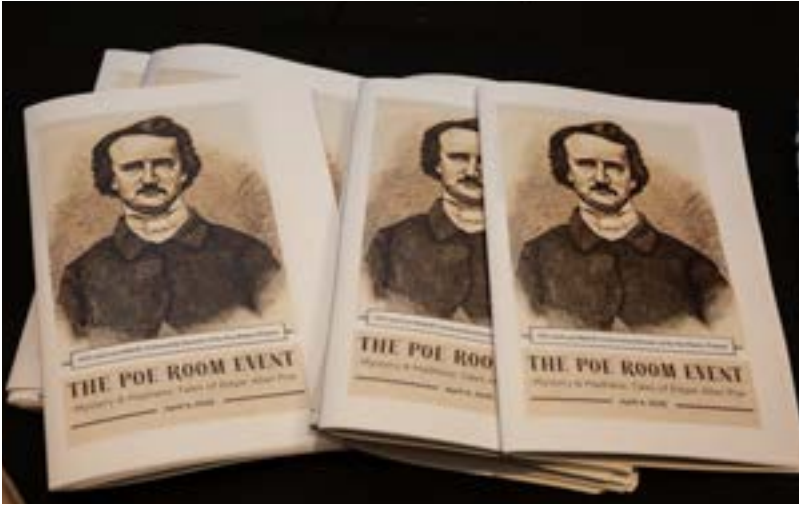
EVENTS in and around the West Village

TALKS / READINGS / LECTURES

Fall 2025 Poe Room Event

Friday, November 21
6-8 PM
NYU School of Law
245 Sullivan Street
Furman Hall, Room 216
(Between W. 3rd Street and Washington Square South)
bit.ly/4k5mxZv

New York University and Lois Rakoff, Community Director of the Poe Room, present "Travel Back in Time for a Conversation with Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Dickens," the Fall 2025 Edgar Allan Poe Room Event. Twice a year, community members and NYU come together and partner on the Poe Room Event to celebrate the life, works, and legacy of Edgar Allen Poe. This event is free and open to the public and an RSVP is required. Visit website for updates. Photo credit: Marian Goldman: Courtesy of NYU Photo Bureau.



Village Preservation Special Event MEET AND GREET WITH ASSEMBLYMEMBER HARVEY EPSTEIN
Thursday, November 13, 6:00 pm
First Ukrainian Assembly Of God
59 Cooper Square (corner of 3rd Avenue and 7th Street). Free, Pre-registration Required
villagepreservation.org/events
Since 2018, Harvey Epstein has been the NYS Assemblymember for the 74th District, representing most of the East Village, parts of the Lower East

Side, and parts of the East 20s, 30s, and 40s. Prior to that he was a community board chair, President of the School District 1 Presidents Council, and PTA President, and a tenant representative on the Rent Guidelines Board. In the State Assembly, he co-authored the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act, which was passed in 2019. In June, he won the Democratic primary to become his party's nominee for the 2nd NYC City Council District, vacated by Carlina Rivera, which includes all

of the East Village, NoHo, and Greenwich Village east of Sixth Avenue. This gathering is an opportunity to hear from Assemblymember Epstein about his thoughts on preservation, planning, development, small business retention, and other issues facing the district he represents, and to hear from Village Preservation and you about issues you care about. There will be a Q&A and an opportunity to chat with the Assemblymember and members of his staff.

NEW YORK COMEDY FESTIVAL
November 7-16 —
Shows run daily/evenings
nycomedyfestival.com
Examples on Friday Nov 7 include:
• "Shannon Fiedler Live," 6:00 PM at New York Comedy Club
4th Street
• "High Line Head Liner Series," 6:15 PM at High Line Comedy Club
• "Connor Burns: GALLUS," 9:00 PM at SoHo Playhouse

The New York Comedy Festival runs November 7-16, bringing top-tier comedians, improv, podcasts, and cult reunions (including a *Strangers With Candy* 25th-anniversary live event with Stephen Colbert, Amy Sedaris, and Paul Dinello) to downtown stages. It's a major multi-venue festival featuring both global headliners and rising voices. Explore at nycomedyfestival.com



ART



WESTBETH WINTER SHOW 2025
November 21 – December 28
Westbeth Gallery
55 Bethune Street
westbeth.org
The annual Westbeth Winter Show celebrates the recent work of Westbeth resident artists in all media: painting, sculpture, multimedia, printmaking, drawing and installation.



SIXTIES SURREAL
Through January 19
Whitney Museum of American Art
99 Gansevoort Street
whitney.org
Sixties Surreal is an ambitious, scholarly reappraisal of American art from 1958 to 1972, encompassing the work of more than 100 artists.

High Wire: Calder's Circus at 100

Through March 9
Whitney Museum
Whitney Museum of American Art
99 Gansevoort Street
whitney.org



RICHARD PRINCE: "FOLK SONGS"
Opens November 6
Gagosian
555 West 24th St.
gagosian.com

Richard Prince's latest body of work riffs on Americana, pop iconography, and music mythology — part appropriation, part storytelling — in a marquee Chelsea space known for museum-scale shows. A presentation of never-before-seen recent work by Richard Prince. Simple handmade paintings, drawings, and collages dating from 2018 to 2023 and five sculptures dating from 2007 to 2025.



THEATER/PERFORMANCE

SUSIE WANG: BURNT TOAST
November 5-8
NYU Skirball Center
566 LaGuardia Place
nyuskirball.com
Acclaimed Norwegian company Susie Wang makes its U.S. premiere with *Burnt Toast*, a surreal, darkly funny horror-tinged thriller about human nature and the uncanny.

WEER
Through December 2025
Cherry Lane Theatre
38 Commerce St
cherrylanetheatre.org
Selling quickly...
New Year's Eve 1999. Star-crossed lovers. A quarrel at the strike of midnight. Edinburgh Comedy Award Winner Natalie Palamides presents an achingly tender 90s rom-com which asks you to look at every argument from two sides. Literally. *WEER* is recommended for ages 18 and up due to nudity, sexual content, and mature themes. Please be advised that this production also includes the use of flashing lights/strobes, prop firearms, and gunshot sound effects. Please also note that guests seated in the first row may get slightly wet.



THE LIAR SHOW
November 11
Soho Playhouse
15 Vandam Street
sohoplayhouse.com
Launched in 2006, Andy Christie's long-running staple in New York's storytelling scene, with a 12-year residency at the landmark Village club, Cornelia Street Café, has also appeared at The Kennedy Center, toured across North America, and was called "A Winner! 4 stars!" by *The Scotsman* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The Liar Show is part comedy, part storytelling, and part audience detective challenge.

JUDGMENT AT NUREMBURG
November 12-16
BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center
199 Chambers Street
tribecapac.org
A stage adaptation inspired by the Oscar-winning film *Judgment at Nuremberg*: former Nazi-era judges and officials face a post-war tribunal, forcing audiences to confront complicity, justice, and moral responsibility.

GRUESOME PLAYGROUND INJURIES
November 7 – December 28
Lucille Lortel Theatre
121 Christopher Street
lortel.org
This darkly funny and heartbreakingly tender revival plays a strictly limited 8-week engagement.



2025 National Book Awards Finalist Reading

November 18
NYU Skirball
566 LaGuardia Place
nyuskirball.org/events

All the finalists for the National Book Awards — Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Translated Literature, and Young People's Literature — read from their shortlisted books. The event is hosted by musician and author Michelle Zauner (*Crying in H Mart*), giving you a live snapshot of the year's most celebrated new writing.

THE PASSION ACCORDING TO JANAIR
November 6-23
HERE Arts Center
145 Sixth Avenue
here.org
HERE hosts this new work inspired by Clarice Lispector's *The Passion According to G.H.* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. The piece follows Janair, a Black domestic worker in Rio, as she confronts racial, gender, and class oppression.

MUSIC

VIJAY IYER QUARTET — WEEKLONG RESIDENCY
November 4-9, Two sets nightly
Village Vanguard
178 Seventh Avenue South
villagevanguard.com
Pianist/composer Vijay Iyer leads a kill-of-a-band with Adam O'Farrill (trumpet), Yunior Terry (bass), and Tyshawn Sorey (drums) in one of NYC's most storied jazz rooms.

MARTHA WAINWRIGHT SINGS LAURA NYRO
November 21-23
Joe's Pub at The Public Theater
425 Lafayette Street (at Astor Place)
publictheater.org/joes-pub
Selling quickly...
Singer-songwriter Martha Wainwright debuts a new tribute set, reinterpreting the fearless, New York-rooted songs of Laura Nyro — emotionally huge, genre-blurring, and deeply personal to NYC.

NIGHTLY LIVE JAZZ AT THE DJANGO
Live jazz from 7:30 PM 'til late
The Django, cellar level of The Roxy Hotel, 2 Avenue of the Americas
thedjangonyc.com
A subterranean Tribeca jazz club modeled after vintage Paris boîtes: vaulted brick ceilings, serious cocktails, and a Meyer sound system. It's an every-night hang for top-shelf improvisers.

CINEMA

NATIONAL THEATRE LIVE SCREENING: MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION
November 17, 18
NYU Skirball
566 LaGuardia Place
nyuskirball.com
High-definition cinema presentation of the National Theatre Live production of George Bernard Shaw's scandalous mother/daughter drama, captured on a London stage.

INDIECHINA FILM FESTIVAL
Festival week November 10-16
HERE Arts Center
145 Sixth Avenue
here.org
The inaugural IndieChina Film Festival brings a curated slate of narrative features, documentaries, experimental work, and hybrid projects — many censored or underexposed in mainland China.

CINEMA



DOC NYC (FESTIVAL + SCREENINGS)
November 12-20 with additional streaming access through November 30
Screens across downtown, including IFC Center, 323 Sixth Ave. at West 3rd St
SVA Theatre, 333 West 23rd Street
Village East by Angelika, 181-189 2nd Ave.
docnyc.net
DOC NYC is billed as America's largest documentary festival, showcasing hundreds of new nonfiction films, filmmaker Q&As, special events, panels, and industry talks. The 2025 edition spans subjects from personal memoir to political accountability, and its venues make it a downtown documentary takeover.

DOC NYC PRO CONFERENCE
November 13-20
Village East by Angelika
181-189 2nd Ave,
angelikafilmmcenter.com
The conference is part of the overall DOC NYC downtown footprint that also includes IFC Center and SVA Theatre. DOC NYC PRO is the festival's daytime industry conference: panels, master classes, and candid strategy sessions on funding, distribution, and storytelling craft for documentary filmmakers, built for real career/production problem-solving.

8 Questions Sellers Should Ask Brokers..... Before they Hire One!

COMPASS

**The difference
between a successful
sale and a stressful
one starts with
selecting an agent
you can trust.**



**Price and commission
are important
considerations. But, is
that all?**

1. What is your marketing strategy? What steps will you take so I receive the maximum market exposure, hence the maximum price?
2. What is your valuation and pricing strategy for my property? How will you help me price my property so I get the top dollar for it and do not leave money on the table? But in the same time we do not scare most of the buyers away.
3. How will you protect me from the risks of sale not closing with buyers with mortgage contingency in the sales contract?
4. How will you protect me from losing all buyers in the multiple bids situation?
5. Is now the best time to place my property on the market? Why? If not, when is it and why?
6. Please explain in detail the difference in the range and quality of services I should expect from you and your firm? And how is that different if I hire a discount broker?
7. Why do you think you are the best person for this assignment?
8. Is there anything else I should be asking you?



Compass is a licensed real estate broker, licensed to do business as Compass RE in Delaware, Idaho, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Tennessee, Compass Realty Group in Kansas and Missouri, Compass Carolinas, LLC in South Carolina, and Compass Real Estate in New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Washington, DC., Idaho and Wyoming and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws.



Kelly Craig
Lic. Assoc. R.E. Broker
M: 917.656.5682
kelly.craig@compass.com