

NYC Theater on a Student Budget

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Let the tourists and the independently wealthy dole out their Benjamin Franklins to get premium seats at Equus this fall. With your newly minted CUID, you too can have your Broadway orchestra tickets, but for a fraction of the cost.

While you may have visited the discount-ticket stand TKTS—now located on the ground level of the Marriot Marquis hotel and downtown at South Street Seaport while its new home is under construction—student rush tickets and Broadway lotteries may be new terminology, but they soon become popular among Columbia students. “When I go to Broadway shows, I always student rush,” Jesse Horwitz, CC ‘10, said. “I’ve never been unable to get tickets to something, although sometimes it hasn’t been my first choice. Even on Saturday nights during busy times of the year you can always rush something decent.”

The going rate for orchestra seats at a Broadway show has ratcheted up to \$116.50 a pop, which is probably a fair chunk of your summer salary. While lotteries are a gamble of an alternative for hot shows like *Wicked* and *In the Heights*, entering your name into the drawing is painless and may yield two front-row tickets priced at a respectable \$26.50 each. Most shows start accepting names at 5:30 p.m. for 8 p.m. curtains, and the winners are announced at 6 p.m. My advice: go with a friend or a date, and each of you enter a different lottery. It increases your chances of winning, and to be honest, it’s kind of exhilarating to hear the names being called.

The other option on Broadway is student rush, which works off the adage “Good things come to those who wait.” Most student rush lines, like those for *Spring Awakening* and *Xanadu*, begin forming outside their respective box offices well before student tickets actually go on sale—which for these shows (and many others) is 10 a.m. As summer comes to a close the lines will certainly shorten, but if the play’s your thing, you may be in luck. I’ve gotten tickets for Tony winners *Boeing Boeing* and *August: Osage County* just 2 hours before show time.

With ticket prices on the rise, and not just on the Great White Way, student rush is a staple at many Off-Broadway venues as well. Second Stage Theatre (2ST), Atlantic Theater, Public Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, MCC Theater, Primary Stages, St. Ann’s Warehouse, New York City Center, and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) all offer student tickets for \$25 or less.

Of special note, Playwrights Horizons is working toward generating a young subscription audience with Student FlexPass, which offers \$10 seats in packages of either four or six tickets per season. And capitalizing on a somewhat broader consumer base, the Vineyard Theatre, Roundabout Theatre, and Manhattan Theater Club (MTC) offer special memberships to patrons under 30 or 35. With proof of age, memberships guarantee discounted tickets and give you a bid into the special theatrical clubhouse.

If you’re simply looking for point-and-click transactions, a host of Web sites can also assist you in your discount-ticketing needs. Among them are theatermania.com, nytix.com, and tdf.org, and ticketcentral.com/snr_home.asp.

With discount tickets at Barnard’s College Activities Office (CAO) and the opening of the new Ticket and

Information Center (TIC) in January, Columbia also has a home-court advantage in the ticketing quagmire. As Barnard's new Vagelos Center is under construction, Barnard's CAO is temporarily located in 102 Brooks. You can visit the ticketing blog at caoticketbooth.blogspot.com to see what the office currently has available. The TIC—which is part of the CU Arts Initiative and is located in the lobby of Alfred Lerner Hall—manages ticket sales for all on-campus productions and provides discounted tickets at off-campus venues. As an added bonus, all sales can be made online at cuarts.com/tickets/.

“This semester we’re looking to increase our numbers with the number of tickets we have and the number of tickets we sell,” Program Manager Caralyn Spector said. At any given time, TIC features anywhere from 12 to 20 Broadway shows, with single tickets priced at \$27-\$37. Spector explained that the office obtains tickets via group sales with individual theaters, or through its special ticketing program with Telecharge.

“There’s some awesome rush and lottery opportunities, but when you’re a really busy student, it’s easier to go online and buy from the TIC. It gives you more opportunity to plan,” Spector said. The CU Arts staff welcomes comments and suggestions from students, and they can be contacted at ticketinfo@columbia.edu. “Technologically we really want to advance into another realm,” Spector said. “We want to become a conversation, not just a resource.”

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