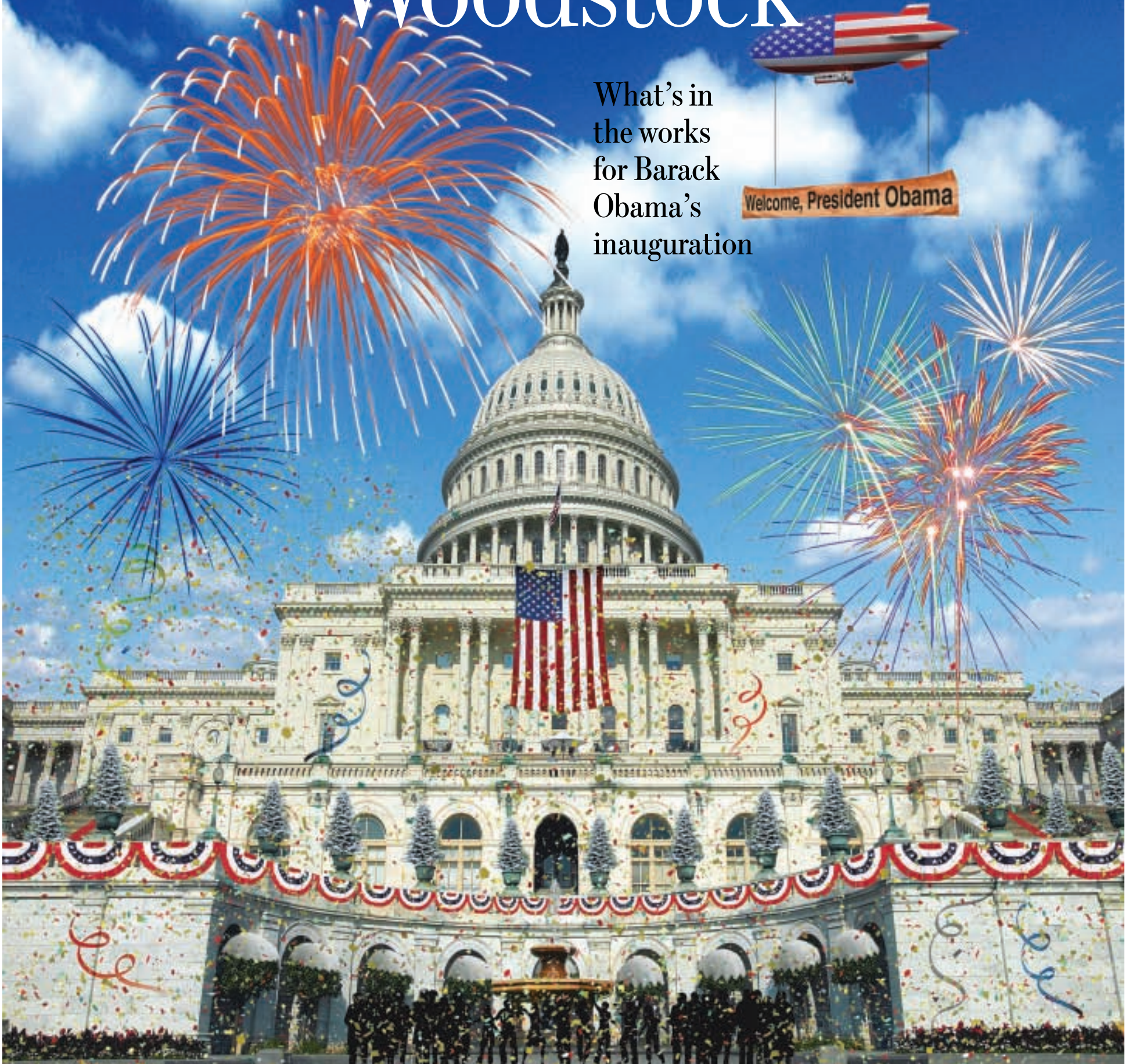


WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE

Washington's Woodstock

What's in
the works
for Barack
Obama's
inauguration



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High-end restaurants are luring customers with discounted dishes.
WSJ.com/Lifestyle

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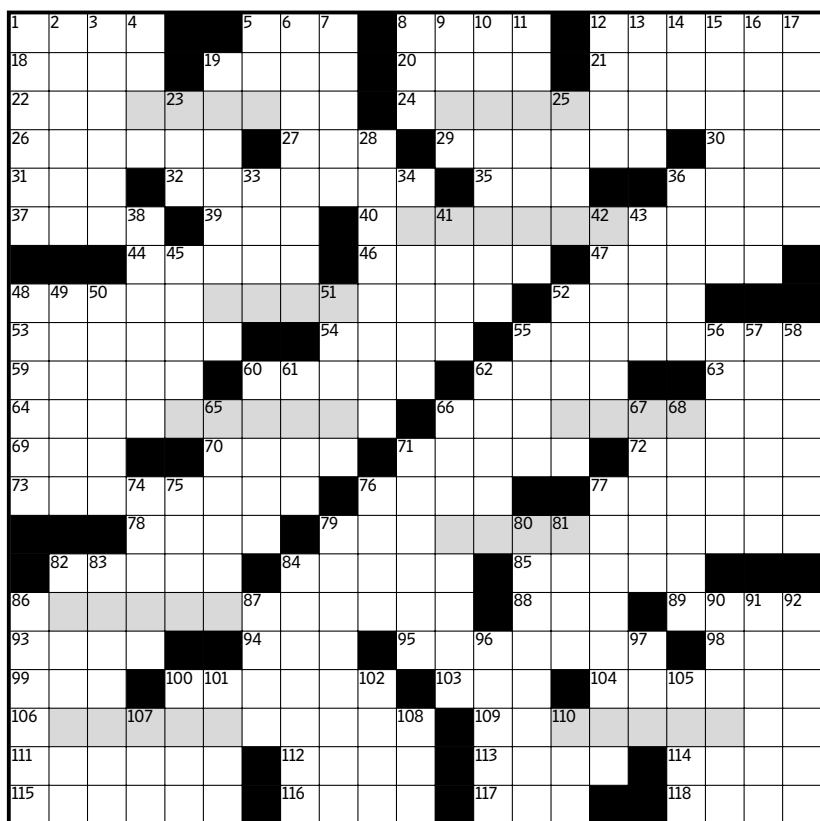
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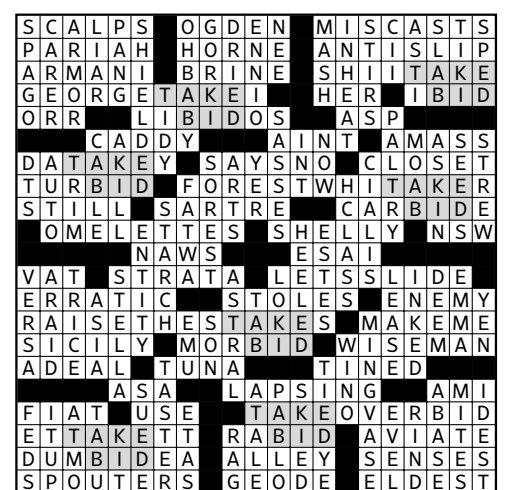
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| 43 "Fancy that!" | 76 Thigh revealer |
| 45 There's a lot of interest in it | 77 Absolutely necessary |
| 48 Hogs the mirror | 79 Man of steel? |
| 49 Forward | 80 Hot-button campaign topic |
| 50 Rock's Phil or Don | 81 Lena of "Chocolat" |
| 51 It means little to Sarkozy | 82 Pizza topping choice |
| 52 Assiduous care | 83 Just pretend to sing |
| 55 Narrow valley | 84 Barrel race competitor |
| 56 Putin place | 86 Arrived at the airport |
| 57 Emits | 87 Rent |
| 58 Golf's cousin | 90 Now |
| 60 Suit piece | 91 Enlightened state |
| 61 Ailment ending | 92 Like some salads |
| 62 Go deep, perhaps | 96 College study |
| 65 Unties | 97 Alley in the comics |
| 66 Stinkers | 100 Apportion |
| 67 Cost | 101 Squeezed (out) |
| 68 Can be removed from the oven | 102 Card dealer's box |
| 71 "Don't bother" | 105 Stock dumper |
| 74 Sound loudly | 107 End for beat or neat |
| 75 Like Cheerios | 108 "For shame!" |
| | 110 Hardly stringent |

Last week's solution



Japan's new style icon: Marie Antoinette

BY YUKARI IWATANI KANE
AND LISA THOMAS

WHEN MAYUMI Yamamoto goes out for coffee or window shopping, she likes to look as though she's going to a formal garden party. One day recently, she was decked out in a frilly, rose-patterned dress, matching pink heels with a ribbon and a huge pink bow atop her long hair, dyed brown and in pre-Raphaelite curls.

Ms. Yamamoto is a hime gyaru, or princess girl, a growing new tribe of Japanese women who aim to look like sugarcoated, 21st-century versions of old-style European royalty. They idolize Marie Antoinette and Paris Hilton, for her baby-doll looks and princess lifestyle. They speak in soft, chirpy voices and flock to specialized boutiques with names like Jesus Diamante, which looks like a bedroom in a European chateau. There, some hime girls spend more than \$1,000 for an outfit including a satin dress, parasol and rhinestone-studded handbag.

"When they come out with a new item, I can't sleep at night because that's all I can think about," says Ms. Yamamoto of the Diamante dresses. The 36-year-old housewife has amassed a collection of 20 princess dresses in the past eight months and even decked out her bedroom with imitation rococo furniture.

Japan has been famous for its extreme fashion fads, mostly among teenagers. These have ranged from the Lolita look, in which women dress up in baby-doll dresses and bonnets, to a tough-girl look called Yamamba, or mountain hag, which requires a dark tan, white eye shadow and shaggy, silver-bleached hair.

But the princess boom is seen as a more polished and sophisticated look that's popular among working women in their 20s and 30s, perhaps as a bit of escapism from workaday stress and economic uncertainty.

"There's a longing for a happy-ending fairy tale," says Asuka Watanabe, a sociology professor at Kyoritsu Women's Junior College, who specializes in street fashion.

While it may be in style among fashionable women in New York and London, black isn't an option for hime girls, who prefer pink and florals. They also have a doll-like sense of beauty that requires effort and practice to attain. To create the ideal "supervolume hair," curl only a few strands of hair at a time and alternate between inward and outward curls, advises Vanilla Girl, a fashion magazine for teenagers aspiring to become hime girls. Dyed hair extensions can help form more dynamic ringlets, while mascara applied on top of fake eyelashes plus black liquid eyeliner can really accentuate the eyes.

The princess boom has also taken off among an unlikely group of women: nightclub hostesses who also like the big-hair, glamorous look, though their dresses are often more revealing.

Jesus Diamante started the princess boom. Toyotaka Miyamae, 52, who had run an import shop specializing in evening gowns, set up the company in Osaka seven years ago to design feminine dresses tai-

lored to Japanese women, whom he found to be shorter and to have smaller chests than Western women. Inspired by his favorite actress, Brigitte Bardot, he created dresses in quality fabrics that mimicked the feminine and elegant style of her youth.

"What I wanted to do wasn't that unique," says Mr. Miyamae, who named the company after a Japanese musical. "I just made them to fit Japanese bodies."

Mr. Miyamae's knee-length dresses are studded with fake pearls and flowers and have names like Antoine (short for Marie Antoinette). They became popular among women who were looking for a cleaned-up look after the popularity of ripped jeans and layered casual clothing in the late 1990s. The chain's sales have grown 20% a year, to \$13.4 million in the year ended March 2008, even though it has just four stores, including one in Tokyo's trendy Harajuku neighborhood. It has spurred a slew of rivals with names like Liz Lisa and La Pafait.

Mr. Miyamae has also hired some loyal customers as shop clerks, who spent time experimenting with makeup and hairstyles to go with the clothes, eventually coming up with the doe-eyed princess look. Diamante started stocking its own interpretation of regal-looking accessories, such as tiaras, elbow-length gloves and stiletto-heeled slippers adorned with ribbons.

Keiko Mizoe, Jesus Diamante's top sales clerk and a former customer, says she sees the princess style as one befitting an elegant woman from an upper-class family. The girls are "perfect, gorgeous and feminine," says the 24-year-old, herself dressed in a red checkered dress, pink stockings in heart patterns and pink nails studded with crystals.

Ms. Mizoe, who the company says single-handedly sells about \$95,000 in clothing each month, has become an idol among Diamante customers, who try to imitate everything about her. On the store's Web site, she keeps a regularly updated blog, in which she lists her favorite food (Godiva's heart-shaped chocolates), favorite drink (cocoa at Tokyo Disneyland) and favorite expression (thank you).

Haruka Oohira, a 16-year-old hime girl, was so in awe of sales clerks like Ms. Mizoe that she made a flurry of purchases online before feeling confident enough to set foot in the Harajuku store. "Their cuteness is beyond human," says Ms. Oohira. "I'd like to be like them."

Of course, princess fashion isn't exactly practical. Ms. Yamamoto, the housewife princess, says she gave up wearing the frilly dresses while she works opening cardboard boxes at an accessory store four hours a day.

Ms. Yamamoto says she has long adored pink and wanted to dress in feminine clothes, but felt shy about her plump figure. After



Above, **Mayumi Yamamoto**; right, **Keiko Mizoe** (at right, with another sales clerk from the Jesus Diamante boutique).



losing about 15 kilograms in recent years, she got hooked on Diamante's tight-waisted dresses adorned with huge rose patterns, and estimates she may be spending \$2,000 or \$3,000 a month. Her husband, an architect who loves Europe, pays for most of her purchases. Her parents, who live nearby, send the couple food so they have more money for Ms. Yamamoto's shopping sprees.

"I figure it's OK as long as what I'm buying is pretty," she says.

—Miho Inada
contributed to this article.

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Hello, Princess

See a video of Japan's hime girls, and the opulent boutiques where they like to shop, at

WSJ.com/Fashion

Classical music with a modern message

British composer Errollyn Wallen's works are often inspired by history, and by complex social issues

BY ANDI SPICER

BRITISH CONTEMPORARY classical music composer Errollyn Wallen initially trained as a dancer at the Dance Theatre of Harlem before turning to composition and studying at both London and Cambridge Universities. She was the first black woman to have a piece ("Concerto for Percussion") played at The Proms in London.

Born in Belize, Ms. Wallen, 43 years old, moved to England as a child and has become one of the U.K.'s most promising young composers. Also a jazz singer and pianist, she has played in jazz saxophonist Courtney Pine's band.

In 2005, she premiered her choral piece, "Our English Heart," a cantata commissioned by BBC Radio 3 to mark the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Admiral Lord Nelson.

Her music combines popular forms with flashes of the avant-garde. And her works often tackle complicated issues, such as those in her opera "The Silent Twins," about the love-hate relationship of two British-born Barbadian twin girls who had their own secret language and misunderstood literary creativity, eventually leading to imprisonment and tragedy.

Her latest piece is "Carbon 12—A Choral Symphony," about South Wales and coal miners. She has also written "Mighty River," an orchestral work to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Britain.

Her composition "All the People of the World" will be performed on Dec. 1, World AIDS Day, by the Halle Orchestra and Halle Youth Choir, conducted by Sir Mark Elder at Bridgewater Hall, in Manchester, U.K.

We interviewed Ms. Wallen at her home in London's historic Greenwich, on the banks of the Thames.

Q: Your themes have become very British over the past few years as well as exploring the black condition in the context of modern Britain. Do you identify with some of the characters of your operas, such as in "The Silent Twins"?

There's so many modern British stories that haven't been told. There's a treasure trove between World War I and the 1950s, a place where there's lots of exciting journeys. Britain's a place with lots of comings and goings because of the sea. There's a lot of people who grew up British and never fitted in.

As for the twins, their relationship was every relationship. To most people they were just two mutes who were considered subnormal. It was an adaptation of the book by Marjorie Wallace of the lives of June and Jennifer Gibbons. This was such a disturbing story and based on a true story. It was emotionally exhausting to write and when you're writing about living people, you have to find the truth in the story, you have to delve into their characters and delineate their characters.

Q: Do you think it's been a help or hindrance being black



Composer
Errollyn Wallen

cause of where I was born. As a composer you find your own story through others.

Q: Since "Our English Heart," the commissions have started to flow recently and your works have become larger in scale.

There was always a steady stream of commissions. But once you've written a really big piece for orchestra, chorus and soloists you can then do anything. After Nelson I felt I had developed as an artist in the ability to say something in a very public way but find something very personal in it too.

Q: Your music uses forms such as the cantata and madrigals. It seems to celebrate Britishness, as with the English Folk Songs, which will be premiered next year.

I should be free to tell any story I want to tell. "Carbon 12" is about the coal mines in South Wales. You could say, what do I know about that? But I make it my business to know. It's one small instance of what it is to be a composer living now and telling the stories of our time. The responsibility to tell that story is just as great to tell as the story of slavery.

Q: The chamber opera "Another America Fire" involves a black astronaut preparing to go to Mars in 2014 and you had help from your friend, the astronaut Steve MacLean, who has taken your music into space in the Space Shuttle and to the International Space Station.

Yes, I made up the story as I really love working with text. The date 2014 was given to me by Steve MacLean as to when it was originally thought that we would

be going to Mars. Steve helped me with my research and we have since written a song together and I was involved with making a short film about his space walk, with him narrating. I've sent emails to him in space and he emailed me back. He stayed with me in my small London flat and said he didn't mind because he'd stayed in smaller places.

Q: You've contributed a song to the piece "Walking down the red dust road," which is a secular requiem for World AIDS Day, with seven other well-known composers providing music for settings of HIV-related poems by Jackie Kay.

Like many people, I have lost friends and family to AIDS and I'm keen to contribute my talents to help fight, not only AIDS but the poverty from which it comes—poverty of knowledge and the poverty of deprivation. It seems unbelievable that the disease still flourishes unnecessarily. Last November I was in Belize performing in a charity concert to raise money for The Hand In Hand mission, which helps all those affected with the disease. We visited one of the centers which cares for babies and I was powerfully affected by the work the team was doing there. The concert was a highlight of my career.

Q: How did the commission come about for the song?

Les Pratt of BBC Radio 3 approached me and several other composers to each write a movement. My piece "All the People of the World" ends the series. The [orchestral] forces will be the same as that of Faure's Requiem, which is included in the concert. Proceeds will go to the Mission Malawi for Action Aid.

and female in your career as a composer?

I'll never know the full answer, but I try to be myself. There's certainly been times when it's been good for me. But I'm more complicated than that. The music comes before me and if I want to be a good composer, it has to be like being a good mathematician.

Q: Do you feel a responsibility

to tell stories about the experiences of black people in Britain?

There's a point where the music has to speak for itself. Growing up in England, I'd find there'd be complexities and contradictions. At home, as a child, we'd eat meals like steak and kidney pudding with rice, which wasn't done by other English families. I started to compose and still compose because of the love of music, not be-

Can old masters weather the economic storm?

OLD MASTERS, WHICH are expected to weather the current market downturn better than contemporary art, are the focus of London auctions next week. The hype

Collecting MARGARET STUDER

that caused the run-up in prices for contemporary works passed by this traditionally more stable sector.

"There was little speculation" in the old master segment, says Paul Raison, who heads Christie's old master department.

In the last major art-market slowdown, in the early 1990s, old masters were "affected, but less," says Alex Bell, world-wide head of old master paintings at Sotheby's. He says he expects buyers to be more selective with marginal pieces, which are harder to sell, but for top-end works to still do well.

The main attractions at Christie's on Dec. 2 will be two



'A Jovial Violinist Holding a Glass of Wine' (circa 1627), by Hendrick Ter Brugghen; estimate: £250,000-£350,000.

striking Venetian views by Canaletto: "The Piazzetta di San Marco, Venice, looking west, with the Libreria" (estimate £4 million-£6 million) and "The Grand Canal, Venice, looking north-west from the Ca' Corner to the Ca' Contarini

degli Scignini, with the campanile of Santa Maria della Carità" (estimate: £3 million-£5 million). The two paintings are appearing at auction for the first time ever.

The Brueghel dynasty is one of the most famous families in art history. Sotheby's on Dec. 3 will offer four works by various Brueghels with the star lot "The Kermesse of Saint George" by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564-1637/38), a canvas with villagers in festival mood as they dance, drink and eat (estimate: £2.5 million-£3.5 million).

Sotheby's evening sale of paintings will also feature a portrait, "A Jovial Violinist Holding a Glass of Wine," by the Dutch master Hendrick Ter Brugghen (1588-1629), estimated at £250,000-£350,000. The painting comes from the collection of Italian industrialist-collector Luigi Koelliker.

In a separate sale on the same day, Sotheby's will offer the contents of Milan-based Mr. Koelliker's London residence, which he is giving up, filled with not only paintings but ceramics, furniture

and sculpture.

Still lifes with flowers, fruits and vegetables are a must at old master sales. Painted with great detail, "they are not too academic and have a huge appeal," says Andrew McKenzie, the old master specialist at Bonhams. The cover lot at Bonhams on Dec. 3 is a gorgeous still life by Dutch artist Jan van Os (1744-1808) with a composition of roses, irises, carnations and other flowers (estimate: £600,000-£800,000).

A Dec. 9 sale at Sotheby's will feature marine paintings, including dramatic images of sailing ships braving the elements on the high seas or fighting for control of the seaways. An example is Thomas Luny's "The destruction of the Santo Domingo. The Battle of Cape St. Vincent. 16th January 1780," an important moment in the European involvement in the American War of Independence, when a British fleet beat Spain, which had taken the side of the Americans (estimate: £30,000-£50,000).

Playing through the hard times

I'M NOT BIG ON predictions, but I do keep an eye out for silver linings. There's a chance, if we're lucky, that the current economic crisis could make golf a better game.

I base this hope on the conversations I had last week with several smart people in the golf industry and on what the game went through

Golf Journal

JOHN PAUL NEWPORT

in the Great Depression. The similarities between golf in that era and this are not precise, but they are at least as strong as the similarities between the stock-market crash of 1929 and the current meltdown, and my economic-journalist colleagues are all over that.

For golf, the 1920s were a Golden Age, headlined by a boom in new courses and the hero-worship of Bobby Jones. The 1990s into the early 2000s has often been called golf's second Golden Age, epitomized by another explosion of new courses and the glamour of Tiger Woods. Most golf histories depict the 1930s as a bleak and uneventful period: Mr. Jones retired from competition in 1930 after winning the Grand Slam, and golf clubs by the hundreds were boarded up. But the era actually was transformative, says Rand Jerris, director of the U.S. Golf Association Museum in New Jersey.

"This was the period during which golf became acceptable to a much wider range of people," he says. Many of those defunct private clubs reopened as public ones. The Works Progress Administration built more than 100 new golf



Virginia Van Wie at the 1934 U.S. Women's Amateur Championship.

USGA Archives

courses in the U.S., opening up the game to thousands. Women, forced by circumstances to work outside the home, took up the game in unprecedented numbers. And the professional tour, though it struggled financially, began to establish itself in the public imagination as charismatic pros like Walter Hagen and Byron Nelson stole the limelight from the blue-blood amateurs, like Mr. Jones, who had dominated golf until then. When golf blossomed again after World War II, it was a different game.

Changes on that scale are not possible now. Golf these days is a \$76 billion industry, according to a study commissioned by the PGA of America and allied groups. But if the economy experiences a prolonged recession, there could be some significant long-term consequences for golf.

Golf through the last few downturns has fared relatively well. "It isn't recession proof, but neither does it have those 20% or 30% peaks and valleys that some other industries have," says Tom Stine, a co-founder of Golf Datatech, a leading industry statistic-keeper. Golf rounds played this year were down 1.4% through September, the latest month for which data are available, and retail spending on equipment was down 3.4%, according to Golf Datatech. "That's down, but it's not that bad," Mr. Stine said.

The game's resistance to economic swings is rooted in the avidity of its core players, who number (depending on the definition applied) from eight million to 12 million, out of 29.5 million U.S. golfers total, according to the National Golf

Foundation. "Golf is their passion, it's what they do, it's central to their lives," Mr. Stine says. They don't stop playing.

Golf's core players are also a bit more affluent than typical consumers, which further insulates the industry from slowdowns. "When it comes to retail sales in a recession, core golfers are like bobbers on the fishing line. They're the last to go under and the first to pop up," says Casey Alexander, the golf-industry analyst at Gilford Securities in New York.

Mr. Alexander expects retail equipment sales to fall 8% or more for the second half of this year and into next year, which is more than in previous downturns, but for golfers to spend freely to catch up once the tide turns. "Imagine going three years without buying a new laptop or a new cellphone. That's how golfers feel without a new driver," he explains.

If that's the case for stability, the case for change is that a lingering recession will force the industry to respond in new ways to golfers' two major complaints about the game: the time it takes to play a round, and the cost.

Golfers might still play in recessionary times, but not necessarily as many holes or at the same price point. In lean time they learn that twilight rounds, nine-hole rounds and discounted rounds at off-peak hours are enough to satisfy their golf Jones, and the savviest operators are learning how to keep their proportional piece of the pie by attracting more of that kind of business.

In the past half-dozen years or

so, golf-course operators have become increasingly sophisticated at managing their businesses. They've had to because overall demand has been flat and the supply of courses, swollen by the imprudent building boom of the 1990s, has been roughly 10% too high. Many of the weakest courses and operators already have been weeded out, leaving relatively

more innovators to fight it out in a recession.

SunCor Golf, for instance, manages six golf facilities in Arizona and one in Utah and thus far this year has seen zero drop in either rounds played or revenue, according to the company's executive vice president, Tom Patrick. To keep prices low it has reduced some nonessential services (like those tip-hungry bag boys who trot out to help you with your bag) and scaled back maintenance standards in certain months so that its courses are not quite so artificially green. These changes, to my mind, are a plus no matter what effect they have on cost; they make golf less needlessly fancy and improve its environmental impact. And thus far SunCor's customers seem to buy into the bargain, too.

Another possible consequence of an extended recession, as in the Great Depression, could be more participation by members of hitherto underrepresented demographic groups. A promising initiative called Get Golf Ready, launched last week by Golf 20/20, a consortium of major golf organizations, hopes to engage adult beginners, especially women and minorities. It offers a standardized \$99 bundle of small-group, on-course lessons and etiquette advice. For newcomers to the game, the industry's willingness to do whatever it takes to attract and retain customers could make this a good time to make the plunge.

Email golfjournal@wsj.com.

Arbitrage

Brita Marella Cool water jug



City	Local currency	€
London	£15	€17.64
Brussels	€18.99	€18.99
Paris	€19.45	€19.45
Frankfurt	€20	€20
Rome	€25	€25
Tokyo	¥4,106	€33.04
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A WPA-built clubhouse in New Orleans.

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THE WINE ADVOCATE, ROBERT PARKER JR.: "The finest glasses for both technical and hedonistic purposes are those made by Riedel. The effect of these glasses on fine wine is profound. I cannot emphasize enough what a difference they make".
TIME MAGAZINE: "The Riedel family has never stamped its name on a single bottle of wine. But over the past 50 years, this Austrian clan of master glassmakers has done more to enhance the oenophile's pleasure than almost any winemaking dynasty". WWW.RIEDEL.COM

Visiting Vancouver, well before the

By Kevin Helliker

In Vancouver, British Columbia, IT'S NOT TOO EARLY to start planning a trip to the 2010 Winter Olympics. But here's an idea that might be even better: Check out Vancouver this season.

Many of the athletes likely to be chasing gold here in 2010 will be competing in Vancouver this winter in about a dozen events, with Olympic berths at stake for many of them. In February, the city is kicking off a yearlong series of concerts and cultural events leading up to the XXI Winter Games, featuring performers from around the world. And travel packages—always reasonable in winter, Vancouver's off-season—are particularly attractive now, because of favorable exchange rates and discounts arising from the economic downturn.

In February alone, the Vancouver area is hosting World Cup races in luge, snowboarding, freestyle skiing and bobsledding, along with an international figure-skating competition. The events will be held on the same trails and in the same arenas that will be used 15 months from now, guaranteeing participation by many of the world's best athletes. (In what Vancouver boasts is the earliest state of readiness in modern Olympic history, most of the venues for the games are already completed.)

The purpose is to give the venues a high-stakes test run, and to give competitors some knowledge of the courses. For tourists, attendance will either be free or cost a fraction of the price of an Olympic ticket.

But for gold-medal groupies and non-sports fans alike, the main argument for visiting this winter is that Vancouver might never be this cheap again. The city's sea-to-mountaintop beauty, rich cultural offerings and diverse recreational opportunities have long made it one of the world's top tourism magnets—but for only half the year. The world's love affair with Vancouver, located an hour north of the U.S. border on Canada's Pacific Coast, is largely a summer dalliance, reflected in the 100% jump in hotel rates from February to August.

This fair-weather passion has never made much sense. A step into the blistering August desert in Scottsdale, Ariz., for example, illustrates the shortcomings of visiting some places off-season. But despite the frosty image of Canadian winters, the off-season in Vancouver isn't frigid and white. It is lush and green, with temperatures rarely requiring anything heavier than a jacket. True, winter here can be rainy. But at dusk, the drizzly winter mist enhances the dream-like allure of the lighted bridges spanning its harbors. On many winter days here, a morning of skiing in the mountains can be followed by an afternoon of sailing, cycling and golf.

It goes without saying that a \$200-a-night first-class hotel room this February will cost more than that in February 2010. But the spotlight of the Games could give a last-



National Geographic Stock

Winter Olympics city offers top athletes and low prices—now

ing boost to winter tourism—and winter prices—even if the Opening and Closing ceremonies here fail to match the choreographic wizardry of last summer's Games in Beijing; the staged theatrics there drew attention away from the city's polluted air and dingy neighborhoods, and from China's political oppression.

For Vancouver, the more apt comparison is Sydney, Australia. Little about the Opening Ceremonies for the 2000 Summer Games there is re-



membered. But unforgettable are the panoramic shots of Sydney's pristine beaches, blue-green waters and gorgeous urban skyline. Vancouver can hope for a similar effect. Rankings of international cities in terms of natural beauty, architectural diversity, cultural richness and quality of life routinely place Vancouver first in North America and within the top five globally.

In a speech this month to the Vancouver business community, John

Furlong, the chief executive of the local Olympics organizing committee, praised the Beijing Games. But while attending them he and his colleagues saw "windows of opportunity" to outshine China, he said, hinting at fuller attendance, better nightlife and richer cultural offerings.

Half of Vancouver's residents speak a first language other than English—Chinese in many cases, along with French—giving the city an international flavor that is reflected

in an array of ethnic restaurants. Downtown can feel like Paris one block, Manhattan the next, and bike shops seem to compete on every block. The waterfront area, which borders three sides of downtown, was teeming one evening last week with cyclists, tourists and joggers. A center of fishing, lumber and high-tech concerns, Vancouver is also North America's third-largest filmmaking center, after Los Angeles and New York.

Moreover, a one-year Olympic cultural celebration, kicking off in February, will feature performances by Canada's Sarah McLachlan, Israel's Batsheva Dance Company and others.

In a city with a sizable radical political element, there have already been more Olympic protests than were allowed during the entire totalitarian Games in Beijing. Much of the controversy involves allegations that nearly every Olympics host city eventually faces—cost overruns and unexpected burdens on the taxpayer. But there has also been some disgruntlement about Olympic disruptions to Vancouver's lifestyle.

As the largest city ever to host the Winter Games (the metropolitan population is 2.2 million), Vancouver will be able to offer greater-than-usual hotel capacity. But early indications suggest that demand for tickets also will be extraordinary, particularly in a nation obsessed with winter sport. Earlier this month, Vancouver Olympic officials disclosed that the first five-week window for ticket requests by Canadians produced four times what Salt Lake City officials received from Americans ahead of the 2002 Games—even though Canada's population is a little more than a tenth the size. Of 170 total events, 120 received an overabundance of requests, requiring lotteries, according to the Vancouver Olympic Committee. For the gold-medal hockey

Trip planner: Vancouver at its best

Where to stay

The city's first-class hotels, including the Four Seasons and the Pan Pacific, have some new competitors, including the 77-room Loden. The luxury boutique hotel (lodenvancouver.com) opened in October and is offering a grand-opening rate of \$155 a night. Even the five-diamond Sutton Place (vancouver.suttonplace.com) is offering deals: a one-night stay this month totaled \$165, including valet parking and a minibar raid.

What to do

Walk, run or cycle the seawall that stretches 22 kilometers around Vancouver. Rent a sailboat or take a harbor cruise (boatcruises.com). Shop the boutiques at the intersection of Burrard and Alberni streets.

Where to eat

This city's most notable food comes from the sea, and no seafood is more highly lauded here than at C Restau-



rant (crestaurant.com), where a basted-lobster entree costs \$38. A frequent recipient of best-local-dining awards, West Restaurant (westrestaurant.com), specializes in regional favorites such as Okanagan venison, \$33.

Whistler

The gorgeous two-hour drive from Vancouver is best

enjoyed as a shuttle passenger, especially since no car is needed at Whistler, which has 90 restaurants and about 5,000 hotel beds. Information about shuttles from Vancouver and the airport can be found at whistlerblackcomb.com.

Hotel offerings range from the Fairmont (starting at \$310 a night) to the Holiday Inn (\$160).

e Games begin



The **Vancouver** skyline; below, speedskaters practice at the **Richmond Oval**—an Olympic venue; left, **Stanley Park**.

Corbis



The Canadian Press/Associated Press

game alone—for which the Canadian public will receive 4,000 tickets—the Committee received 140,000 requests.

Most hotels here have yet to place their inventory on the market for the 2010 Games, which will run Feb. 12 through Feb. 28. But early evidence suggests strong demand for packages that are highly expensive. Of seven hotel-and-ticket packages starting Feb. 12 being offered through CoSport, the official ticket agency of the U.S. Olympic Committee, five already are sold out and all involve room rates above the winter average here. A three-night double-occupancy stay at the Sheraton Vancouver—including a pair of tickets to two events plus the Opening Ceremonies—is selling for \$20,800. (The total face value of the tickets is about \$4,000.) By contrast, a room at the Sheraton this February can be had for about \$125 a night.

Mountain events at the 2010 Games will be split between the peaks outside Vancouver and Whistler Blackcomb, which ski enthusiasts rate among the world's top destinations for the quality and quantity of its snow as well as for its size. The resort's two mountains, with vertical drops topping out at 1,584

meters, boast 3,240 skiable hectares—more than 50% larger than Colorado's Vail resort—and more than 200 trails, making it North America's largest ski area and one of its steepest. The resort is a two-hour drive from Vancouver, along one of North America's most beautiful coastal highways.

A new draw this winter: On Dec. 12, Whistler Blackcomb will open Peak 2 Peak, a \$52 million gondola that will set world records for height as well as length of unsupported free span, according to resort officials. The lift will enable skiers to move from one mountain to the other without making the long crossing at the base, where lift lines can be lengthy.

Vistors this winter will also have the chance to try out some of the Olympic courses, an experience that die-hard ski bums and snowboarders say heightens the appreciation of watching the Games on television.

WSJ.com

Let the pre-Games begin

See a calendar of some of the world-class competitions taking place this winter in and around Vancouver, at

WSJ.com/Travel

"When you've been down the course, you see and know things that no television camera can capture, like the true steepness of a slope," says Tag Kleiner, a 100-days-a-winter Rocky Mountain skier who traversed the Olympic trails ahead of the 2002 Salt Lake City Games.

Still, no matter how beautiful Vancouver looks to the rest of the world, no matter how efficiently it operates the Games, Canadians will be devastated if 2010 turns out to be a repeat of 1988, the last time this nation played host to the Winter Games, when their athletes failed to win a single gold medal at Calgary, Alberta. And that followed an utter dearth of gold at the 1976 Summer Games in Montreal. So Olympic officials in Canada have launched an initiative called Own the Podium 2010, which has raised millions of corporate dollars to provide athletes with top-of-the-line equipment and instruction, and also gin up public encouragement.

"If our athletes don't do well," concedes Mr. Furlong of the Vancouver Olympics organizing committee, "most people in Canada will forget everything else that happens here."

Five to watch

Here are some of the athletes expected to be medal contenders at the 2010 Winter Olympics.



Bode Miller & Lindsey Vonn

Can Bode Miller and Lindsey Vonn, the reigning World Cup alpine champions, overcome their cursed Olympic histories? At the Torino Games in 2006, Ms. Vonn didn't make it past a training session before taking a horrifying fall that

required emergency helicopter evacuation, and Mr. Miller underperformed. Neither won a medal, despite several previous World Cup victories. In 2008, they became the first Americans in 25 years to sweep the men's and women's overall World Cup titles.

Sidney Crosby

After failing to win a single gold medal at the 1988 Calgary Games or the 1976 Games in Montreal, Canada needs home-field redemption. The most coveted prize—a gold medal in hockey—could depend on the performance of Mr. Crosby, the nation's 21-year-old superstar center.



Dale Begg-Smith

Of greater interest than whether Dale Begg-Smith will defend his Olympic gold medal in the freestyle moguls competition is whether Canadians will cheer or boo the Vancouver native. As a teenager, he became disenchanted with Canadian

coaches who pressured him to spend less time on his Internet startup (which ultimately earned him a fortune), so he moved to Australia and won a gold under that country's flag in 2006. He'll attempt to do so again in Vancouver.



Joannie Rochette

A figure-skating surprise in Vancouver could be the 22-year-old Ms. Rochette, a four-time Canadian national champion who finished fifth in Torino. Home-field advantage, along with a recent surge in her performances—just this month she won an international title in Paris—could put her on the 2010 medal stand.

Agence Zoom/Getty Images (Miller); NHL/Getty Images (Crosby); Getty Images (3)

Tourists warm up to Syria

BY BROOKE ANDERSON

Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

Damascus, Syria

WHEN FRENCH President Nicolas Sarkozy visited here in September after hosting Syrian President Bashar Assad earlier in Paris, he went a long way toward breaking this Mediterranean nation's diplomatic isolation.

But tourists, many of them European, have been warming to Syria for some time. Part of the appeal has been the charm and relative ease of getting around in a place that hasn't turned into the type of mass tourism destination that other Arab countries like Morocco or Egypt have become. Syria offers inexpensive and reliable public transportation and its tourist attractions are not thronged with crowds.

Stephen Wagner, a 27-year-old paramedic student from Leipzig, Germany, and a fan of Middle Eastern culture, recently spent nearly three weeks traveling through Syria. Friends told him it was an easier place for foreigners to visit than other Arab countries—with no tourist traps and fewer hassles from street vendors. "I was in Morocco in the spring, but I found it too aggressive toward tourists, with people always trying to sell things," Mr. Wagner says. "I heard Syria was completely different. And it's true."

Spaniard Luis Olivares, who also made a recent trip to the country, adds: "I like the hospitality and the fact that it's easy to move around here."

Drawn by a handful of new, boutique hotels in Damascus, an Old City that officials are slowly restoring, and an overseas-marketing campaign, the number of foreign visitors has risen by 50% this year compared with last year, according to the Syrian ministry of tourism.

At just over seven million visitors in 2007, the boost is helping Syria catch up with some of the region's more established tourist destinations, like Egypt, which drew 10.6 million visitors last year, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council, a London-based trade group.

The growth comes despite occasional incidents of violence that take place in the city and elsewhere in the region. Hezbollah fighters in next-door Lebanon took to the streets of Beirut in the spring, but then quickly withdrew. After a power-sharing deal there, Beirut's legendary parties, nightlife and beach clubs are back in full swing. Relative to the rest of the Middle East, the past several months have been peaceful in Syria's tourist areas. Syrians claim U.S. forces killed eight civilians in late October in a cross-border incursion near the Iraqi border. But the incident, still not completely acknowledged by the U.S., took place far from Damascus.

Even recent violence in Damascus itself hasn't put off tourists so far. In September, a



Alamy (4)

Clockwise from top right: a coppersmith at work in Aleppo; the Roman theater in Bosra; a camel outside the entrance to the Palmyra ruins; the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

car bomb—a rarity in this tightly controlled police state—detonated on the road leading to the city's airport, killing at least 17. Hotels say they aren't seeing canceled bookings.

"The violence in Syria hasn't been in tourist areas, unlike in Egypt, Israel and Yemen," says Sabine Bachstein-Hallaje, a German tour guide who has been leading groups in Syria for the past 20 years. "After Sept. 11, people are now adapted. They know there is no place

that is always safe. There is risk everywhere."

"Terrorism here isn't a greater risk than in London," says Cathy Stancer, a Briton having lunch recently at Al Kaseda Al Demashkieh, a restaurant in a newly restored Damascene house on Straight Street in the Old City.

Syria had been considered a pariah state by Western and Arab governments alike just a few months ago because of its alleged meddling in Lebanese politics and its support of the Palestinian group Hamas and Lebanon's militant group Hezbollah. Now, the country is

coming in from the diplomatic cold. There have been several important high-level visits from Western politicians during the past few months, the most recent being from British Foreign Secretary David Miliband on Nov. 18. Mr. Assad won praise for endorsing the Lebanon power-sharing deal, and he's even conducting indirect peace talks with longtime enemy Israel. European countries, particularly Turkey and France, have been directly involved in the discussions.

Still, Syria's recent political history can deter visitors—especially Americans. The U.S. designated Syria a state sponsor of terrorism in 1979 and has issued a number of sanctions against the country. It pulled its ambassador out a few years ago after accusing Syria of complicity in the assassination of Lebanon's prime minister. (Syria denies involvement.)

There is no ban on Americans visiting Syria, but the U.S. State Department advises its citizens to think twice before traveling there, warning among other things that tourists could be the target of extremist attacks inside the country. The U.S. Embassy in Damascus was attacked two years ago by assailants with two vehicles laden with explosives.

But Syrian officials have also played a big part in this year's tourism boom. The Syrian government is in the process of restoring Damascus's Old City, a warren of ancient churches, mosques, Turkish baths and restaurants.

Tourism officials have also stepped up efforts to attract European and Asian visitors, launching big-budget promotional campaigns across Europe. They've descended on tourism fairs in Milan, Berlin, Brussels and Moscow, as well as Beijing and Tokyo. Damascus's turn this year as Unesco's Arab "Cultural Capital" has created buzz within the region. "Everything came together this year," says Faisal Najati, a tourism-ministry official in Damascus.

In addition to its well-known desert—Palmyra, a three-hour bus ride from Damascus, is an oasis with lush green palm trees and has some of the best Roman ruins in the Middle East—Syria offers Mediterranean beaches mostly devoid of large crowds. Its two main coastal cities, Tartous and Latakia, both a couple of hours' drive north of Damascus, have undergone major renovations in recent years. Chic restaurants have opened up along the waterfronts, and new high-end hotels are on the way. There are also breathtaking mountains near the border with Turkey.

Both Damascus and its northern rival Aleppo have vibrant and attractive Old Cities. In addition to their ancient citadels and souks or open-air markets, the streets offer a rare window on traditional Middle East life. Merchants play backgammon on the cobblestone streets until the middle of the night. Craftsmen work on mosaic boxes and pottery in front of their workshops. Locals often invite foreigners into their homes for large family meals.

Damascus is also a perfect base for day trips outside the city. It's an hour's drive to the Aramaic-speaking village of Maaloula (its population is about 70% Christian), the Roman theater in Bosra, and some of the oldest churches in the world. Foreigners can safely and easily take buses from depots in Damascus, with round-trip fares at less than €2.

But there are some logistical challenges. A tourist visa, obtained through local Syrian embassies, can cost as much as €100, depending on nationality, and can take as long as two weeks to process.

For some visitors, the hassles can continue even after getting a visa. Jonathan Hagelstein, a 32-year-old banker from New York City, said he was questioned for five hours by Syrian border guards on his way from visiting Lebanon. Still, he says, once he got in, "I felt safer in Syria than in many other areas in the region."

Trip planner: Seeing Damascus

Where to stay

Syria has hotels for all budgets. For five-star service, go to the Four Seasons, Damascus' newest luxury hotel. The standard rate for a room there is €205, €230 with breakfast. (☎ 963-11-339-1000, www.fourseasons.com/damascus).

If you're looking to soak up the atmosphere of the Old City, Beit Zaman is one of several boutique hotels converted from restored Damascene houses. Single rooms start at €110, and deluxe suites are €375 (☎ 963-11-543-5380, www.beit-zaman.com).

Where to eat

The Four Seasons has three restaurants—Safran (featuring international cuisine), Il Circo (Italian) and Al Halabi (Syrian cuisine)—for high-end dining.

For the Old City experience, go to Khawaly, a restored Damascene house with a

roof terrace, on Medhat Basha Street by Al Hamidieh Souk. Guests are treated to home-style Syrian food as well flat bread made right in the middle of the main dining room.

For inexpensive bistro dining and quick service, Shamiat, just above the President's bridge, is a favorite with locals and foreigners alike.

What to do

Damascus has so much to offer, most people leave without visiting all that they want to see in one trip.

Here, some sights not to be missed: The Umayyad Mosque is a former church whose architectural history dates back to pagan times. Hanania Church, in the Christian Quarter of the Old City, is where Saul became Paul and converted to Christianity.

The Hamidieh Souk is a large Ottoman-era market where one can find spices from around the world, traditional Arab clothing, handicrafts and almost any item can be bar-



gained down to a reasonable price.

No visit to the Old City would be complete without visiting some of the best restored Damascene houses, including the Danish Cultural Center by Medhat Basha Street, in Souk al Soof, as well as Maktab Anbar near Straight Street's Roman arch.

Washington's Woodstock

BY JOHN JURGENSEN
AND JAMIN BROPHY-WARREN

HOLLYWOOD celebrities, Web activists and jet-setters from around the world are preparing to turn the U.S. presidential inauguration on Jan. 20 into a mix of Woodstock and Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 speech on the National Mall.

While the plans of many top politicians and entertainment stars hang on pending details about the Commander-in-Chief Ball and other official events that Mr. Obama is likely to attend, dozens of other big-ticket parties are already taking shape. The Creative Coalition, an advocacy group, will host a ball at the Harman Center for the Arts. Spike Lee will be at the event, Susan Sarandon is likely to attend and the group is in discussions with such musicians as Elvis Costello to perform. Tickets to the fund-raiser, where director Barry Levinson will be shooting final scenes for a film called "Poliwood," a documentary about Hollywood's involvement in the presidential race, are still available—a \$10,000 "bronze" package admits two.

Love, one of the few Washington nightclubs that sees a steady flow of celebrities, is adding tents to triple its capacity to about 7,000. "The last time we had that many people it was for Beyoncé," says owner Marc Barnes about a concert with Ms. Knowles in 2002.

Many of Mr. Obama's supporters in Hollywood kept a low profile during the campaign, in part because of efforts by Sen. John McCain to cast his opponent as a celebrity. The inauguration offers a chance for celebrities to come out of the shadows. Oprah Winfrey, for example, plans to be on hand, and so does the singer India.Arie. Invitations go out in December for a party being hosted by real-estate mogul and Obama insider R. Donahue Peebles, his wife Katrina and an evolving list of celebrity co-hosts, including Star Jones and Chris Tucker, at the posh Georgetown Club. The invitation-only event for a few hundred guests will kick off at midnight after official festivities on Jan. 20.

At the fifth Bytes and Books Inaugural Ball, the National Coalition for Technology In Education and Training plans to honor George Lucas and Sen. Ted Kennedy at its \$2,500-per-couple event (for the lowest-tiered sponsorship). Sen. Kennedy underwent surgery for a brain tumor this year.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation expects 2,000 people, many from the gay and lesbian community, at its "Equality Ball" at the Mayflower Hotel on the evening of the Inauguration. Celebrity guests will include Melissa Etheridge, Cyndi Lauper and Rufus Wainwright.

The Newseum, a glass and marble museum on Pennsylvania Avenue dedicated to news, has booked 10 private parties during inauguration week. Jay Norris, managing partner of Lifestyle Communications, a brand development firm based in New York, says he plans an invitation-only "worldly, eclectic celebration" in the museum, which



rents for up to \$50,000 an event.

The international jet-set is converging, too. Quintessentially, a luxury lifestyle service based in more than 40 world cities, says the majority of its dozens of inauguration requests have come from abroad. For members, whose dues run from \$1,500 to \$40,000 annually, the company will be supplying everything from local wardrobe stylists and rental homes (minimum \$25,000 for three days), to tickets to the official presidential balls, which head of marketing Jaclyn Gower says Quintessentially can supply in limited numbers.

Hill Harper, an actor on "CSI: NY" and a former Harvard Law School classmate of Mr. Obama, will be co-hosting an after-hours party modeled on other wee-hour soirees during the campaign that he threw with fellow Hollywood fund-raisers, including Nicole Avant, Mr. Obama's California finance co-chairwoman. With the entertainment world descending on Washington, Ms. Avant says, "there will be more celebrities than we've ever had." She has some concerns about how she and her co-hosts will include regular supporters in the celebrity-heavy crowd. "It's important that the tone remains consistent with the tone of the whole campaign, which is very inclusive," adds Mr. Harper.



What's in store for the Obama inauguration

Observers have been handicapping the musical picks since Nov. 5. The odds favor artists who have performed at official Obama events, such as the singers John Legend, Chicago native Jennifer Hudson and Bruce Springsteen. Mr. Springsteen is releasing a new album the week after the new president is sworn in that features a title song, "Working on a Dream," that he first played at an Obama rally.

Congressional organizers are looking for ways to expand capacity for Mr. Obama's swearing-in ceremony beyond the 240,000 tickets allotted. City officials are preparing for millions to converge on the Mall. Destination DC, a tourism nonprofit, says that they expect the 2009 event to be larger than the 1.2 million that reportedly attended one of the largest inaugurations, Lyndon B. Johnson's in 1965.

Meanwhile, as Mr. Obama's transition team moves quickly to fill his cabinet, his inaugural crew is also gearing up. A former Obama campaign staffer, Emmett Beliveau, was appointed earlier this month to head the Presidential Inaugural Committee that will make decisions on everything from the locations for the official balls to the marching bands who will parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. (A representative of the Obama transition team declined an interview request.)

Mr. Obama's inaugural committee is sifting through a deluge of participation requests. The Armed Forces Inaugural Committee, which processes the applications from groups that wish to march in the parade, had received more than 1,300

applications as of the deadline last week, up from 375 applications in 2005.

Some of the most determined hopefuls include major artists. Tresa Sanders, a record-label representative for Mary J. Blige, the rapper Common and other high-profile recording artists, says she's been keeping in touch with Obama organizers in hopes of positioning her artists for a performance slot.

Less-than-famous performers, including local cover bands and acts like the Strolling Strings, will perform at the Illinois State Society's ball—but it's a hot ticket nonetheless. Mr. Obama has been sent an invite to his home state's bash, but there's no guarantee he'll show, says Executive Chairman Suzanne New: "We know he had a good time in 2005 and we hope he's going to come back for another one." Filling three floors of the Renaissance Hotel, the party will spotlight points of state pride, including a version of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre and the state fair. Some 2,000 dinner tickets for \$500 each have sold out, but \$300 tickets for the ball itself are available.

Tickets are sold out for another state event with a chance for a presidential appearance: Hawaii, where Mr. Obama was raised. The state society's ball will be held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. One star of the campaign who could be attending,



Among the celebrities expected to appear at Barack Obama's (left) inauguration (clockwise from above): India.Arie, Hill Harper, Rufus Wainwright, Spike Lee and Oprah Winfrey.

according to her representative: Obama Girl, aka Amber Ettinger, whose "I Got a Crush on Obama" music video caught fire on the Web.

Despite George W. Bush's low approval rating, the Texas State Society's Black Tie & Boots ball is expected to be a big draw. Some 9,500 tickets at about \$200 each have been sold so far for the party at the new Gaylord National Resort Hotel in the emerging National Harbor complex across the Potomac River. Expect to see lassoes draped over fences, performances by country stars such as Jack Ingram, and female attendees in "full-length sequined ball gowns, large Texas hair and eel-skin cowboy boots," says Jenifer Sarver, the society's historian and media chairwoman.

The grassroots masses that helped push Mr. Obama to victory are using familiar strategies to mount celebrations. For election night, Curtis Midkiff Jr., a 34-year-old marketer living in Washington, used online social networks to organize a party on U Street, a hub of black nightlife that saw some of the city's most feverish celebrations that night. On the morning of Nov. 5, Mr. Midkiff formed a Facebook group for potential inauguration visitors, which has grown to nearly 15,000 members, and he's planning several parties, including a Welcome to D.C. gala and a party for pro athletes.

Anxiety about the economy and other factors are keeping some party planners in check. Andrew Gerstel, vice president of Windows Catering Co. in Alexandria, Va., says many of his potential clients, including big law firms and lobbying groups that typically hold parade-watching parties, are weighing which bash to scratch—holiday or inauguration. "They say, 'We don't have the budget for both.' But they know it might send the wrong message if they don't celebrate the inauguration of a new president, much less an historic one such as Barack Obama," Mr. Gerstel says.

But for many attendees, parties will take a back seat to witnessing to history, Mr. Midkiff says. "As long as they're on the Mall, their story will be how they felt it. It won't matter that they saw it on a Jumbotron, what will matter will be that they were there."

—Ellen Gamerman contributed to this article.

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Capital ideas

See inauguration trip-planning tips for all income levels, at

WSJ.com/Travel

Havel's Humanity

By Salil Tripathi

In 1988, when he was still a dissident playwright, Vaclav Havel began writing a play about the angst of a political leader about to relinquish power. Outwardly, the leader looked supremely confident; inwardly, he had no idea how he would face his future. For a Czechoslovak writer only used to living under

Real accounts of his life, and a version without the fairy-tale ending.

dictators, even imagining a leader honoring the limits the constitution imposed was a heroic act. But then, Mr. Havel had done many more heroic things, such as writing plays like "The Garden Party" and "The Memorandum" and leading Charter 77, the movement of Czech and Slovak intellectuals fighting for fundamental freedoms. He was accused of "disturbing the peace" (which became the title of one of his later books) and jailed for four and a half years.

Mr. Havel called that play about the politician "Leaving." But he had to leave it incomplete—not because he had to hide it from the state police, but because he had the Velvet Revolution to lead. By 1989, Mr. Havel was attracting crowds when he spoke. Nearly 200,000 heard him speak at Prague's Wenceslas Square that November; the next month he became Czechoslovakia's president. More than 13 years later, he left the presidency of the truncated Czech Republic when his term ended. Along the way, he helped to disband the Warsaw Pact, advocated the Czech Republic's admission to NATO and the European Union, and provided moral authority to public office.

As Mr. Havel said recently during a talk at the British Library in

London, he had no time to work on "Leaving" or any other play while in office; indeed, he had almost forgotten its existence. But he rediscovered the manuscript after retirement, and his muse inspired him again. "Leaving" opened in Prague earlier this year and in London in September. It is now running at the Orange Tree Theatre to packed audiences.

There cannot be a more suitable venue for the play than Orange Tree, whose director Sam Walters has done more than anyone else in bringing Mr. Havel's plays to Western audiences. A longtime supporter of Mr. Havel's work, the theater has staged most of his plays and championed Charter 77. As an added treat, Orange Tree is performing more Havel plays through Dec. 13, including "Mountain Hotel."

The Havel-fest doesn't end there: In October, the London International Film Festival screened "Obcan Havel" (Citizen Havel), a documentary by Pavel Kouteck and Miroslav Janek. And earlier this year, Portobello Books published "To the Castle and Back," Mr. Havel's memoir of his years in power. Taken together, the new play, the documentary and the book provide a remarkably consistent view of Mr. Havel's humanity.

"Leaving" is about Vilém Rieger, a chancellor finding the trappings of power leaving him as his term ends. Nobody likes his new companion, who looks like an aggressive shrew trying her best to show the leader in good light. He has two daughters from a previous marriage: one who is absorbed in her internal universe of cellphone, laptop and iPod, but

who offers a lifeline to the family when it matters; the other, married to a quiet man, is keen to ensure that the new companion won't raid the family silver. Meanwhile, mafia capitalists have emerged, to the chagrin of the departing leader; a besotted student follows him, willing to trade romance for access to power; and his cynical successor has his eyes set firmly on the commercial potential of the presidential palace and wants to get rich quick.

Critics have noted obvious parallels with Mr. Havel's own life—as if Mr. Havel is looking back at his life, mocking both himself and his successor, Vaclav Klaus. Mr. Havel has denied such an interpretation. But if the play is autobiographical, it is oddly confessional. It does not exculpate Mr. Havel's alter ego, who ends up as a hapless and helpless clown, demeaning his reputation.

Mr. Havel is fascinated by the odd turns that life takes, and those themes resonate in "Leaving." It is as if he is exploring how his life might have turned out if it did not have a fairy-tale ending. There are nods to three great influences on Mr. Havel's writing: William Shakespeare ("King Lear" and its weakened ruler with his daughters); Anton Chekhov ("The Cherry Orchard" makes frequent appearances, literally and metaphorically); and Samuel Beckett ("Endgame" and its absurdity resonate). Ever the practical joker, Mr. Havel makes off-stage intrusions into the play, through voice-overs in his trade-

mark accent, telling the actors what to do and what not to do (such as getting melodramatic).

Mr. Havel has frequently noted life's absurdity. In his new memoir "To the Castle and Back" there are long, thoughtful passages in which he reflects on what propelled him to the presidency. In the documentary, we observe him closely during his presidency, as he grapples with dilemmas and cuts through obscurity to arrive



at morally sharp decisions. When asked how he can tolerate Czechs spreading falsehoods about him in parliament, he says philosophically that democracy imposes restraints on those who believe in it, even if those who don't believe in democracy can act without any restraint. Rather than take a pragmatic, convenient way out of another crisis, he says his responsibility is to speak the truth. Living in truth (the title of yet another of his books) is what he did facing up to the Communists; as president, he is not about to make any compromises. (In the play, the leader is attached to a statue of the nonviolent Indian leader Mo-

handas Gandhi; in the documentary, we see the framed picture of Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi on his mantelpiece.)

The memoir reveals how the cocoon of presidency frustrates him: The tedium of the quotidian is exasperating. He has to deal with dull bureaucrats who believe they can improve on his speeches. He has to deal with a bat living in his attic, the quality of food served to guests, the choice and placement of cutlery, the ordeal of getting his cigarette lighter fixed.

He also struggles against software advancements that complicate tasks like word processing. His memoir is not a straightforward narrative with a beginning, middle and end. First, there are edited extracts from his diary, not necessarily in chronological order. Then there is an account of his

postpresidential life, based on reflections written during a sabbatical at the U.S. Library of Congress. Finally, we see his thoughtful responses to a journalist who asks him complex questions about his presidency.

The fragmented structure seems discontinuous at first, but it eventually becomes comprehensive—a testament to the fairy-tale outcome of an astonished intellectual at the center of history, staring down lies, tearing down walls. In the end, all of that makes sense, as in a Havel play.

Mr. Tripathi is a writer living in London.

Paul McCartney's Latest Collaboration

By Jim Fusilli

During a BBC interview broadcast last week, Paul McCartney mentioned a never-released Beatles track, "Carnival of Light," recorded in 1967. By doing so, he buried this week's news: He's issued a new album, "Electric Arguments" (MPL). It's by Mr. McCartney and producer/musician Youth, who record together under the name The Fireman, and it's markedly different from anything the duo has released in the past.

Until now, The Fireman's work—"Strawberries Oceans Ships Forest" (Capitol), released in 1993, and "Rushes" (Capitol), issued five years later—could be classified as ambient dance music: Electronic pulses provide the underpinning to repeating themes punctuated by percussion, shouts and exclamations, though if you listen carefully you can hear the occasional fragment of a McCartney recording. You might call The Fireman's earlier music a rhythmic distant cousin to the kind of pre-Minimalism of John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen that was said to influence "Carnival of Light," though one suspects the Beatles track Mr. McCartney alluded to might be a mid-'60s version of his "Liverpool Sound Collage" (Capitol), a

2000 album that's credited to Mr. McCartney, Youth, Super Furry Animals and the Beatles.

"Electric Arguments" is a rock album that mixes elements of the genre's past with its present. Each song was written and recorded in a single day—13 songs, 13 days—thus leaving little time for overthinking the tracks, though one suspects Youth did more than a bit of mixing and mastering. Mr. McCartney sings and plays most, if not all, the instruments, and wrote lyrics to music that he and Youth conjured in the studio. The other contributions of Youth, who produced Crowded House, Depeche Mode, U2 and the Verve, and worked on the new Guns N' Roses release "Chinese Democracy," are more difficult to gauge; as accomplished as he may be, he isn't part of our musical DNA, as is Mr. McCartney, who's so identifiable that you'll recognize his breathing when he plays harmonica. There's the temptation to say that Youth's presence liberates Mr. McCartney to let it rip. But it's rarely so simple. I mean, does Paul McCartney, at age 66, really need cover to do what he wants?

Whatever the relationship in the studio, it works. If "Electric Argument" doesn't sound like previous albums by The Fireman, neither does it sound like Mr. McCartney's recent pristine solo efforts, which are a tad reserved.

Which isn't to suggest the album is a cluttered knock-off. It's a seriously good piece of modern rock, and there is at least one performance that can stand proudly in the McCartney canon: "Sing the Changes," a bright, boisterous celebration of life inspired

by Paralympic athletes. Over 12-string guitars and driving percussion, he sings, "Feel a sense of childlike wonder," a line that anticipates the listener's reaction to the song. There's a joyous video on YouTube for it in which Mr. McCartney calls the athletes "heroes." (In fact, there is at least one video on YouTube for every song on "Electric Argument," providing an easy way to sample it.)

Throughout the album, the duo draws on a wide range of traditional and synthesized sounds. In "Dance 'til We're High," Mr. McCartney's voice flies over staccato strings. Tabla

and what sounds like sarod and sitar add a sense of India to "Lifelong Passion." A pan flute introduces "Is This Love?" before a chirping guitar ushers in Mr. McCartney's vocal, which, as in several tunes on the album, is surrounded in a wash of electronics, creating a different context for this very familiar singer.

For decades, Mr. McCartney has enjoyed toying with his voice. In "Traveling Light," a lilting folk ballad buoyed by piano and flutes, he sings at the bottom of his range. "Two Magpies," a loose-limbed folk blues, finds him singing near the top. And on "Light From Your Lighthouse," a foot-stomping sliver of country folk, he has it both ways, overdubbing his voice so he sings the opening verse in both falsetto and a grizzly bass. By the way, "Light-house" has a very catchy chorus, the kind you can sing before the song reaches its end. He's done that before, hasn't he?

Every now and then, there's an undeniable allusion to the Beatles. A chiming George Harrison-like guitar part opens "Sing the Changes." Kicking off with the blare of a blues harmonica, "Nothing Too Much Just Out of Sight" becomes a brooding piece of heavy rock bound to recall "Helter Skelter." With its tambou-

rine and high-hat percussion and fat guitar and bass, "Highway" invokes "Drive My Car." A plucked electric bass offers a counterpoint to a strummed 12-string guitar on "Sun Is Shining," another pleasing track with a great vocal and an appealing chorus. Are the chirping birds from the tape that was used on the Beatles' "Across the Universe"?

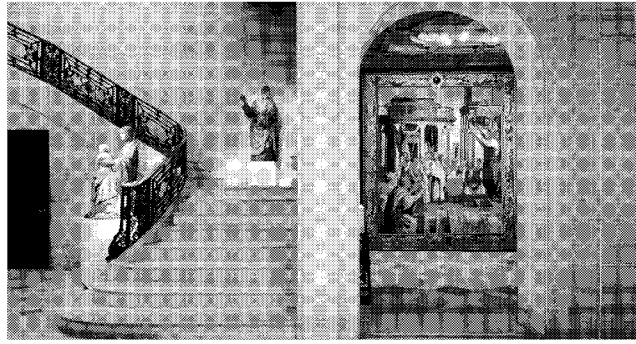
Mr. McCartney has emerged as the great musical experimenter among the Beatles, in part due to his longevity—his colleague John Lennon was murdered on Dec. 8, 1980—and in part due to his temperament. He was interested in electronic music as early as 1965; made tape loops that turned up on Beatles recordings; released in 1977 a cheesy instrumental-and-vocalese version of his album "Ram" under the pseudonym Percy "Thrills" Thrillington—a ruse that went undiscovered for 12 years; and composed several well-regarded classical pieces. If "Electric Arguments" is one of the better Paul McCartney rock albums of recent years, it is also another expression of his desire to expand the boundaries of his art.

Mr. Fusilli is the Journal's rock and pop music critic. Email him at jfusilli@wsj.com.

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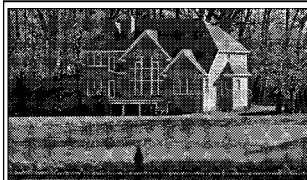
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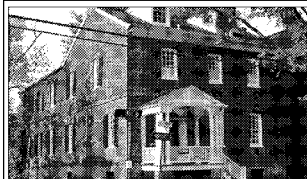
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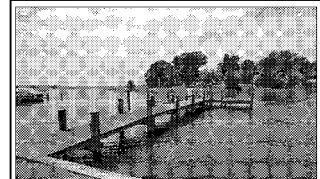
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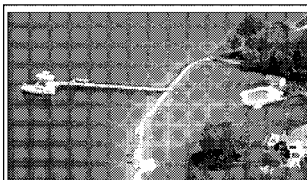
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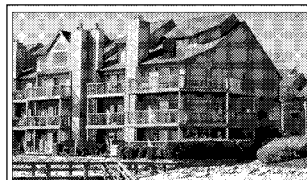
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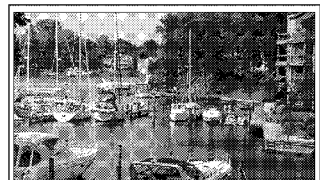
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Amsterdam

art

"Jacob Backer: Rembrandt's Opposite" exhibits 40 paintings and 20 drawings by Dutch Golden Age painter Jacob Adriaensz Backer (1608/9-1651).

Museum Het Rembrandthuis
Nov. 29-Feb. 22
☎ 31-20-5200-400
www.rembrandthuis.nl

photography

"Viviane Sassen—Flamboya" presents recent portraits of young Africans in Zambia, Kenya and Tanzania by Dutch photographer Viviane Sassen.

FOAM
Until Jan. 18
☎ 31-20-5516-500
www.foam.nl

Berlin

art

"Cult of the Artist: Giacometti, the Egyptian" shows work by Swiss surrealist sculptor and painter Alberto Giacometti (1910-1966).

Egyptian Museum
Until March 1
☎ 49-30-2090-5577
www.smb.spk-berlin.de

photography

"Helmut Newton: Fired" exhibits work by German-Australian photographer Helmut Newton (1920-2004), shot during the 1960s and '70s for fashion magazines Elle, Queen, Nova and Marie Claire after Newton was fired from French Vogue in 1964.

Museum für Fotografie
Nov. 30-May 17
☎ 49-30-3186-4825
www.smb.museum/smb



© Helmut Newton Estate

Brussels

opera

"Rusalka": Stefan Herheim stages a contemporary vision of Antonin Dvorák's lyric tale of the nymph Rusalka and her quest to possess a human body and soul in order to express her love for a young prince and be loved by him.

La Monnaie
Dec. 5-21
☎ 32-7023-3939
www.lamonnaie.be

Cologne

art

"Looking for Mushrooms: Beat Poets, Hippies, Funk and Minimal Art 1955-1968" explores art and culture in San Francisco around 1968, through art, design, film, poetry and photography. Includes work by Stan Brakhage, Robert Crumb, Lenny Bruce, Peter Saul and others.

Museum Ludwig
Until March 1
☎ 49-221-2212-6165
www.museenkoeln.de

Dublin

art

"Northern Stars and Southern Lights: The Golden Age of Finnish Art 1870-1920" exhibits works by Eero Järnefelt, Väinö Blomstedt, Pekka Halonen, Juho Rissanen and others.

National Gallery of Ireland
Until Feb. 1
☎ 353-1-6615-133
www.nationalgallery.ie

Edinburgh

fashion

"Jean Muir: A Fashion Icon" is a retro-



© VG Bild Kunst, Bonn

Above, "Nova," 1971, by Helmut Newton, on show in Berlin; right, "Head of a Cow," 1983, by Stephan Balkenhol, in Hamburg; top right, "D.N.A.," 2007, by Viviane Sassen, in Amsterdam.

Centre d'Art Contemporain
Until Feb. 1
☎ 41-22-3291-842
www.centre.ch

Hamburg

art

"Stephan Balkenhol" exhibits figurative sculptures created from soft wood by German artist Stephan Balkenhol (born 1957).

Deichtorhallen Hamburg
Until Feb. 1
☎ 49-40-3210-30
www.deichtorhallen.de

Lisbon

art

"Work Art in Focus: The 53 Stations of the Tokaido" shows woodblock prints depicting legends and tales related to the post stations of the Tokaido road between Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto.

Museu Calouste Gulbenkian
Until Feb. 28
☎ 351-21-7823-000
www.museu.gulbenkian.pt

London

art

"Paths to Fame: Turner Watercolours from The Courtauld" shows a collection of 30 works by J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851).

Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery
Until Jan. 25
☎ 44-207-872-0220
www.courtauld.ac.uk

art

"Bruegel to Rubens Masters of Flemish Painting" exhibits 51 Flemish paintings from the 15th to 17th centuries.

Queen's Gallery
Until April 26
☎ 44-20-7766-7301
www.royalcollection.org.uk

opera

"Monkey: Journey to the West" is an opera from the creators of the pop band Gorillaz and director Chen Shi-Zheng, featuring the Dalian Circus of China.

Millennium Dome—O2
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☎ 44-20-7536-2600
www.monkeyjourneytothewest.com

Madrid

photography

"Alberto García-Alix: From Where There Is No Return" showcases photography in various formats taken between 1976 and 2008 by Spanish photographer Alberto García-Alix (born 1956).

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
Until Feb. 16
☎ 34-91-7741-000
museoreinasofia.mcu.es

Oslo

art

"Blowout!" presents highlights from 30 years of work by the first Norwegian glass studio formed by artist Ulla Mari Brantenberg and glass artist Karen Klim.

Henie Onstad Kunstsenter
Until Dec. 20
☎ 47-67-8048-80
www.hok.no

Paris

music

"Gainsbourg" presents art, music, photography and documentation illustrating the career of French music performer and icon Serge Gainsbourg (1928-1991).

Musée de la Musique
Until March 1
☎ 33-1-4487-4500
www.cite-musique.fr

Prague

art

"Jarmila Maranová: Kafka and Prague" shows 54 monotypes by the Czech artist Jarmila Maranová (born 1922), illustrating literary works by Franz Kafka.

Jewish Museum
Until Jan. 4
☎ 420-221-7115-11
www.jewishmuseum.cz

history

"The Republic" presents documents, posters and photography illustrating 90 years of history since the founding of Czechoslovakia.

National Museum
Until March 15
☎ 420-2-2449-7111
www.nm.cz

Rome

art

"From Rembrandt to Vermeer: Civil Values in 17th Century Flemish and Dutch Painting" exhibits 55 major Flemish and Dutch masterpieces from the 17th century, including paintings by Vermeer, Rubens, Hendrickje Stoffels and others.

Museo del Corso
Until Feb. 15
☎ 39-066-7862-098
www.museodelcorso.it

Warsaw

photography

"No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-1987" shows 137 photographs by 33 documentary photographers illustrating life in Britain from the late '60s to the late '80s.

Centre for Contemporary Art
Until Jan. 11
☎ 48-22-6281-2713
csw.art.pl

Zurich

archaeology

"Roman Treasures Buried and Rediscovered" presents late-Roman (260 A.D.) gold jewelry and silver coins from Lunnern in the canton of Zurich.

Schweizerisches Landesmuseum
Until March 22
☎ 41-44-2186-511
www.musee-suisse.com/e/zuerich

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What's on

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