



# Going on with the Show

## Arts & Culture in New York City after September 11

Artists may live for applause, but they can't live on it.

Broadway ticket sales have rebounded since September 11, in large part because Mayor Giuliani did just about everything but join the cast of “Cabaret” in an effort to bring New Yorkers and others back to the Great White Way. But even with audiences returning to Broadway and beyond, most of the city's 2,000 arts organizations are gearing up for their rockiest period in 30 years.

The arts sector has witnessed severe blows to all three of its core funding streams—earned income from ticket sales and other sources, contributed income from wealthy individuals and foundations, and government funding. Those organizations reeling from deep setbacks in all three of these areas have virtually no recourse: Unlike businesses that can rely upon insurance seek government bailouts or turn to new markets when they hit hard times, most arts organizations simply have no safety net.

With all of the other pressing problems in the city right now, why should we care? Well, for one, arts organizations are responsible for 130,000 jobs and contribute \$13 billion to the local economy. In addition, New York's economy has always been driven by creativity and ideas—the city is a media, marketing and fashion center—and a vibrant cultural sector is one of the reasons many businesses choose to locate here. Even financial organizations cite the city's world-class cultural offerings as one of the factors that keep them in the Big Apple.

A prolonged slump in New York's cultural sector will not only mean more layoffs, it will be a substantial blow to the city's identity and allure.

This report is the first comprehensive assessment of the field of arts and cultural organizations in New York post-September 11. The results of our survey shine a spotlight on an industry that is fundamental to our local economy and our quality of life. Beyond documenting the impact, this report contains recommendations that can serve as a roadmap for all involved in rebuilding New York.

# KEY FINDINGS

Over the course of the past two months, the Center for an Urban Future has conducted a comprehensive survey of the field of arts and culture in New York. Our research combined focused interviews with over 40 arts leaders in each borough with an analysis of tourism and attendance data and information about over 150 organizations from three separate studies sponsored by the Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York, New York City Arts Coalition, and the Cultural Institutions Group.

## All Revenue Has Been Rocked

- Fully 100 percent of the more than 150 arts organizations surveyed have already seen or expect to experience substantial economic losses over the next three months.
- More than 90 percent of all fundraisers held since September 11 raised significantly less money than originally anticipated.
- An estimated 2,000 scheduled school trips to arts organizations have been cancelled since September 11.
- The Center estimates that the average arts organization will see losses in revenue of 15 percent this year.
- Fifty percent of organizations surveyed reported that major gifts and donations are being cancelled or postponed.
- Government cutbacks are coming in a number of forms, including a 15 percent cut at the city's Department of Cultural Affairs, a 10 percent cut in the state cultural budget, and the elimination of state line-item grants.

## Large-Scale Layoffs Are Coming

- Initial job-loss projections for the field overestimated the number of immediate layoffs, but layoffs in the arts continue to occur, and more are likely on the way. Every organization surveyed has instituted a hiring freeze and drafted a "contingency" plan for possible work reductions, salary reductions or layoffs.
- In one telling finding, none of the organizations the Center interviewed in late September and early October had laid people off; by early November, many of those same organizations had laid off staff members in the intervening weeks.
- Layoffs are only one of the ways in which arts jobs are being lost: For example, six Broadway shows in the planning stages have been put on hold, which will lead to a large number of jobs deferred.

## New Yorkers are Coming Out

- The vast majority of the city's 2,000-plus arts organizations reported that less than 10 percent of their visitor base comes from outside the New York City area.
- By the beginning of October, most nonprofit arts organizations were close to hitting normal attendance levels for this time of year. The notable exceptions were the handful of Manhattan institutions that are heavily dependent on tourists and those organizations closest to the WTC site.
- Some organizations, such as the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, the Queens Zoo, the Staten Island Botanical Garden, and the borough libraries have actually seen spikes in attendance.
- New Yorkers have powered Broadway's resurgence with attendance now slightly above what it was in the first week of September. The ticket buyers are increasingly local residents: Some 52 percent were from the city and its suburbs, up from 39 percent just a year ago.

## Part I

### The Effects on Arts and Culture: Nonprofits have been rocked

Most people associate the arts in New York with Broadway and the art galleries of SoHo and Chelsea, but they're only a piece. In fact, arts and culture production in the city is dominated by nonprofit organizations. There are over 2,000 art nonprofits in the five boroughs ranging from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with its budget of \$130 million, to the 128 theater companies with budgets below \$100,000 a year. Most of these organizations have a diverse revenue base that is split between earned income (ticket sales, sales of gift items, renting performance and rehearsal spaces to other artists), contributed income (foundation and corporate support, fundraisers, individual giving), and government funds (the lion's share from New York City). The chart below demonstrates the degree to which one group of arts and culture institutions is strongly dependent on all three of these revenue sources.

Revenue at City-Supported Arts and Culture Institutions<sup>1</sup>

Revenue Source	% Government	% Contributed	% Earned
Percentage of Budget	17%	43%	41%

Source: New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Note: this data is an average.

Each and every one of the arts and culture organizations we examined for this study has lost funding since September 11, no matter how diverse its revenue base. Worse, each expects to lose a lot more over the next year. In surveying well over 100 nonprofit arts groups of every size all throughout the city, the Center found that every single one experienced a major whack to at least one of its primary funding streams, and that most are expecting significant funding shortfalls in all three categories. Overall, we found out that the majority of these organizations will experience an average of a 15 percent reduction in income this year.

The blows are coming from every direction. City and state budgets have been slashed, individual giving is being re-directed to September 11-related causes, annual fundraisers are being dropped or pulling in a lot less money than anticipated, public schools are canceling field trips and cultural program contracts in all five boroughs, and capital campaigns have all but ground to a halt.

#### *Earned income has taken a plunge.*

The most immediate impact on earned income was a massive drop off in ticket sales. Hundreds of arts groups experienced steep declines in September ticket sales, particularly those south of 14th Street in Manhattan. Every theater company surveyed in the SoHo and TriBeCa neighborhoods was closed for between one and four weeks. And some organizations, such as the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the city's three children's museums, opened their doors to the public for free, resulting in a complete halt to ticket sales.

While many cultural organizations have seen their attendance numbers crawl back up (see Part II: New Yorkers Coming Out), the drop-offs of September were a major financial blow. Queens Theatre in the Park, for example, had a drop of at least 30 percent in sales during the months of September and October. The Wildlife Conservation Society (that oversees the City's zoos and the New York Aquarium) has seen a drop of 40 percent in attendance in the month of September, which translated into \$447,300 in lost earned income.

Drops in ticket sales have a direct affect on other sources of earned income, such as membership and gift shop sales. Glenn Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art, notes that, "It's all connected. If your attendance drops then you have fewer people buying merchandise, and then you are less visible and member ship [dips]."

Another major source of revenue for many organizations, particularly dance and theater companies, is rental income from rehearsal and performance space. These income streams were hit particularly hard by the events of September 11. The Culture Project, on Bleeker Street in Greenwich Village, has seen 18 straight weeks of theater-space rentals cancelled at virtually the last minute. These cancellations punched a \$245,000 hole in the group's operating budget and forced the medium-sized theater company to lay off three staffers. The BAT Theatre, closer to ground zero in TriBeCa, has been unable since September 11 to rent out the theater space it typically devotes to outside performances. It calculates the loss at \$800 a day and doesn't predict any takers in the near future.

#### *Contributed income is shrinking now and will contract much more.*

Nonprofit arts organizations are greatly reliant on revenue from corporate and individual donors and private foundations. Even organizations that receive a lot of city funding still bring in between 30 percent and 70 percent of their annual budgets through contributions.

Fully half of the organizations that the Center surveyed for this report said major gifts and donations are being cancelled or postponed, either because individuals are donating money to causes related to September 11 or because they have seen the value of their investment portfolios plummet. Alexandra Conley, executive director of the SoHo Rep. theatre company reports that "The big checks we count on [seem to be] drying up." The Staten Island Botanical Garden saw a half-million-dollar commitment rescinded right after the World Trade Center attacks. And every organization with a budget over \$5 million that we surveyed has seen anticipated checks either cancelled or postponed.

Annual fundraisers are faring no better. Every arts organization that has held a fundraiser since September 11 or plans to hold one before the end of the year has brought in significantly less money has or cut back on its projection of income for the event. One typical example is the American Museum of the Moving Image, where income from its fall fundraiser is expected to come in between \$50,000 and \$100,000 below its target. According to Matt Bregman, the museum's deputy director for institutional development, many companies and individuals that typically supported the fall fundraiser sustained major financial losses from the attacks.

Groups haven't lost as much ground with foundation grants and corporate giving, another large source of contributed

<sup>1</sup> This data is from the 34 organizations in the Cultural Institutions Group, which are located on city-owned property and receive a regular allocation of city tax levy funding every year.

## School field trips cancelled by the thousands are hurting nonprofit arts groups financially

Yellow school buses have long provided an important stream of earned income to many arts organizations. On a typical weekday, tens of thousands of schoolchildren from all five boroughs and the surrounding suburbs pour into the city's arts organizations. But terrorism fears and traffic backups have drastically curtailed field trips, taking another chunk out of many organization's budgets.

Virtually all inter-borough bus trips have been cancelled, and trips by subway or within a borough are frequently being called off as well. Trips from outside of the city have also dropped off, with buses from Long Island, New Jersey and other surrounding areas garaged until further notice.

Canceling trips may be the right thing to do at the moment, but it is having a deleterious effect upon many arts organizations that both depend on the revenue and consider education part of their mission. Every one of the organizations surveyed that typically sees a lot of visitors from schools has experienced a dramatic decline in attendance. The drop-off in school visits is actually far greater than declines in overall attendance: For example, schoolchildren account for almost a third of the 40 percent drop in attendance at the Bronx Zoo. At the Staten Island Children's Museum, where well over half of the 150,000 school kids who visit every year come from Brooklyn, fears about crossing the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge have resulted in an 80 percent drop in school trips to the museum since September 11. Based on the Center for an Urban Future's analysis, as many as 2,000 school trips to arts organizations have been cancelled over the past two months.

income. Of all the funding streams, philanthropic giving looks to be the most secure for the current fiscal year.

The arts groups surveyed expressed fears that money would be diverted this year to September 11-oriented causes, but the vast majority of foundation program officers and presidents say they are doing everything they can not to deflect a cent away from commitments to current grant recipients. "We're not diverting any of our funds. The mentality is that everyone is trying to maintain the current level of funding," says Leah Kraus of the New York Community Trust, a major city supporter of the arts that has also set aside a large sum of money for the September 11th Fund.

While funders interviewed for this report are fairly certain that they can meet their commitments for this year, they are not as sanguine about sustaining the same level of support for the arts in the future. The biggest issue for private foundations is the economy, which

was particularly strong even before September 11. The downturn has had a substantial effect on endowments at many foundations, particularly small family ones. "A lot of portfolios are down," says Darcy Hector, of the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation. "Yes, we are back to pre-September 11 levels, but that wasn't so great. So we and [other foundations] are looking at reduced payouts next year."

Corporate giving is also likely to take a hit. Gary Steuer of the Arts & Business Council notes, "The problem is not September 11th, and not funds being drained to go to relief. The problem is the weak economy, and to the extent that the weakness of the economy was exacerbated, that's the effect of September 11th. Since most companies are on a calendar fiscal year, the full effect will not be felt until we get into 2002."

*Government is in the process of cutting budgets significantly.*

While support for art organizations is only a minute part of city spending, it's a crucial slice of many organization's budgets. A total of \$137 million, or one-third of one percent, of New York City's annual budget directly supports the arts—a small percentage that is a major lifeline to some local organizations.

The city has already announced what is sure to be only the first round of major cuts. In October, the Giuliani administration announced that it will make across-the-board cuts of 15 percent in funding to all city agencies except uniformed services. Arts organizations are expecting cuts of *at least* 15 percent this fiscal year, and are planning accordingly. These cuts will affect different organizations to a lesser or greater extent, depending on how much of their annual budget comes from government, and on ability of their staff members and boards of trustees to make up the difference by bringing in more foundation, corporate and individual contributions. Nonprofits that don't have heavy-hitting, wealthy trustees will suffer much more. Some are very worried—the Bronx Museum of Art, for example, gets approximately 40 percent of its annual budget from city government. Jenny Dixon, the museum's director, was already planning a 15 percent cut for this year to help close a historic budget deficit, and because she anticipated a recession that would lower the museum's income from the private sector. Now, she's taking at least another 15 percent out of the budget, severely restricting program activities at the museum.

In addition to city cuts, a number of cuts in state funding are going to sting organizations as well. The first is an across-the-board 10 percent cut from the New York State Council on the Arts. Second is the elimination of the line-item grants that individual assembly members and senators make every year to organizations in their districts. The Staten Island Children's Museum, for example, will lose a line-item grant worth \$90,000 this year, a substantial amount for a \$1.5 million-dollar institution.

*Large-scale layoffs haven't happened, but will come, and planned jobs are being left in the lurch.*

Initial predictions of job losses in the arts sector were astronomical. Surveys predicted between 4,000 and 8,000 jobs lost in the theater sector alone. Our own survey of both Broadway and off-Broadway organizations indicates that layoffs so far are in the hundreds, not the thousands.

But just because massive layoffs haven't hit yet doesn't mean they won't. As a first step, every single one of the organizations we surveyed has instituted a hiring freeze. And every one of them is also drafting a "contingency" plan to for laying off and furloughing workers should

that become necessary. The delay in layoffs in the arts contrasts with the conduct of private-sector employers, many of whom were forced to let people go immediately after September 11. "We are a people intensive industry; we have to cut everything we can before we cut staff," notes Norma Munn, of the New York City Arts Coalition.

The pink slips will come, though. We found budget shortfalls of between 10 to 25 percent at many organizations. Most telling from the Center's point of view is that none of the organizations we interviewed in late September and early October had laid people off, but we discovered in research in late October and early November that many of those same organizations had laid off staff members in the intervening three weeks.

In addition, thousands of jobs in that had been pipeline will never be filled because of cancelled productions and withdrawn investments. Our survey found six Broadway shows in the planning stages that have been put on hold. Large museums and theaters are canceling exhibits and productions that employ artists, stagehands and security personnel.

## Part II

### New Yorkers Coming Out

Tourism is big business in New York. Last year the city saw 37.4 million visitors, whose presence generated \$17 billion in spending in the city. But the arts in New York are not powered solely by visitors. Unlike residents of Las Vegas, Orlando or even San Francisco, New Yorkers are the primary audience for their city's cultural attractions. Newspapers are watching every downtick in tourism and airline travel, but what is becoming increasingly clear is that arts organizations must have local patrons to survive. Well, New York's got 'em.

The vast majority of arts organizations the Center surveyed said that less than 10 percent of their visitor base comes from outside the New York City area. By the beginning of October, most nonprofit arts groups were close to hitting normal attendance levels for this time of year. The exceptions to this are the Manhattan organizations that are heavily dependent on tourists, and those located nearest to the WTC site.

"Ticket buying did come to a complete halt around September 11, but it has picked up," says Linda Shelton of the Joyce Theater in Chelsea, one of many small- and medium-size groups supported by a core fan base of New Yorkers. "People are trying to get back to a more normal life, and the Joyce isn't so dependent on tourists, so it hasn't hit us hard yet." Some organizations such as the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, the Queens Zoo, and the borough libraries have even seen spikes in attendance as people seek them out for solace in the wake of the attacks.

Factoring out a drop in school visits, the Staten Island Botanical Garden has actually seen a rise in visitors, something that it attributes directly to a long stretch of warm weather and the after-effects of September 11. "We are getting more people who might have gone for a day trip to Hershey [PA] or Great Adventure, who are deciding to stay much closer to home. People just don't want an expedition," notes Lance Konselman, vice president at the garden.

#### *Broadway bouncing back*

Broadway shows run on a weekly profit margin of 5 percent to 10 percent, so a dip of even 15 percent in attendance in one week can wipe

## Of special concern: Capital campaigns are struggling to meet their goals

Capital campaigns are another economic casualty of September 11.

The vast majority of capital funding comes from corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals, though city investments have grown tremendously as well. All of the above have already or are likely to pull back from capital investments—at the same moment that arts organizations throughout the city are in the midst of ambitious capital projects. Pregones Theater in the South Bronx was in the middle of a long-term project to acquire several thousand square feet for itself and other Bronx artists and to build a 200-seat theater. "It has been a roller-coaster since September 11," says Alvin Colon Lesprier about the group's efforts to keep the capital project on track. While the building's current owner still seems interested in selling Pregones the building, it has become much harder to piece together all the different sources of funding—public and private—even with commitments in place.

One of the best-known projects is that of the Museum of Modern Art, which has bought a building in Long Island City to which it will move temporarily in 2002 while its home is completely renovated. It's most of way toward its goal, but getting to the finish line is a much more daunting task than it was just a few months ago. Glenn Lowry, head of the MoMA, says, "My sense is that fundraising will be twice as hard as it was before, and we are all going to readjust our expectations."

The city has played an increasingly crucial role in funding major capital projects. City capital spending has grown by dramatically over the past 8 years—back then, city funding went only to the 34 members of the Cultural Institutions Group. Now it goes to those 34, plus an additional 90 other arts organizations. The Giuliani administration made its mark with substantial capital contributions to some of the city's most important cultural institutions. All these commitments may be in jeopardy—from the well-known ones like Lincoln Center and the Guggenheim, to borough-based development plans such as the Brooklyn Academy of Music cultural district in Fort Greene.

a show out completely. It was no surprise, therefore, that the 65 percent dive in attendance after the attacks forced five shows to close immediately.

But all other shows on the Great White Way are still in business, and, remarkably, attendance has climbed past pre-September 11 levels. Broadway had 167,899 patrons the week that ended September 9; the next week those numbers dropped like a rock, to 65,155. By October 28, however, weekly figures are up to 221,263.

October sales are historically stronger, but the comeback is still remarkable; one reason for it is a sharp increase in the number of New York-based ticket buyers. Audience breakdowns for the last couple of weeks from the League for American Theaters show that 52 percent of ticket buyers were from the city and the surrounding suburbs, up from 39 percent just a year ago.

To be sure, New Yorkers are not the only engine behind Broadway's quick rebound. It was produced by a confluence of factors: the mayor's intense focus on bringing patrons back; a huge marketing campaign; major ticket discounts; and labor savings from unions accepting salary cuts. But the drop-off in tourism coupled with the tremendous response from New Yorkers has made it clear to Broadway that it is both necessary and possible to more effectively cultivate local audiences.

## Part III

### The Arts Respond

Of course, arts groups aren't the only ones reeling from the effects of September 11 and a sinking economy. Our airports, high-tech firms and retail establishments have all been hit hard, and there's probably more to come. But the arts and culture sector has distinguished itself particularly in its response to our changed world. It has set up a number of relief efforts and public campaigns to get its organizations — and others — back on their feet. And it has responded to people's need to gather and heal with targeted programming in a way that no other important economic sector can. What follows are a few examples:

#### *Emergency stabilization funds*

When assessing the revenue drop in this field, one important factor to consider is that compared to other industries, the vast majority of arts organizations — and artists themselves — have absolutely no safety net. There are no government bailouts or relief funds available to most of them, and individual artists are having difficulty qualifying for loans from the Small Business Administration.

In response, a number of arts groups are organizing modest emergency stabilization funds. The largest effort is a partnership called the "9-11 Arts Rebuilding Program," for which the New York Foundation for Arts will be the fiscal conduit. This fund would immediately assist the smaller and most vulnerable organizations, as well as artists that are in serious financial trouble, using grants pooled from local and national foundations looking to assist the arts in New York directly. Additionally, the Alliance for Resident Theaters/New York, an association of nonprofit theater companies, is establishing an emergency fund to support the companies below 14th Street that have been hit hard by falling ticket sales and the loss of rental income.

#### *Promotional campaigns*

With the mayor all over the airwaves in his bid to spark Broadway ticket sales, it might seem that there is little need for a major arts promotion campaign. But nonprofit arts organizations are entering their rockiest period in over 30 years just as New York's economy needs them the most.

Beyond Broadway, organizations from every corner of the cultural sector, from galleries to museums to dance troupes, have expressed exasperation at the lack of attention they've received from City Hall and others involved in rebuilding efforts. To get arts on the city's radar screen, the Alliance for the Arts, a research and advocacy group, has begun a major marketing campaign called "The Arts Rebuild New York," to raise a million dollars for research, for briefings with elected officials, and to promote the diverse range of city arts organizations to tourists. The Alliance has already retained the services of publicist extraordinaire Howard Rubenstein to help them kick off the campaign.

Other organizations are planning major campaigns to broadcast messages about the rich nature of the cultural sector, especially around the holiday season. The Arts & Business Council, for example, is leading a local and national campaign called "Arts for Hope," using promotions and special programming to send the message to the public that the arts are there for them in these difficult times (and always). The prominent cultural advertising agency, LaPlaca Cohen, is donating its services to this effort.

#### *A Broadway Empowerment Zone*

Broadway was already one of the riskiest ventures in town — now, potential investors are pulling away. Our survey found six shows that were scheduled to begin financing this spring that have been put on hold. While ticket sales have climbed back up, there is still serious doubt about the long-term prospects for returns from investments in Broadway shows.

To help mitigate the growing risk, a few philanthropic insiders have devised a Broadway empowerment zone incentive that would benefit producers based on the number of people they employ. The idea, drafted with the help of John Breglio, chairman of the Theater Development Fund, is for the federal government to provide the incentive of a 20 percent reduction in payroll taxes for every newly hired actor, musician and stagehand employed in a new, commercial Broadway or off-Broadway production. Breglio stresses that this is a modest proposal and would only apply if a show doesn't do well. "This is not a bonanza for a 'Producers' or a 'Lion King.' If the show is a hit or even a mild success, the incentives phase out."

At the moment, Rep. Charlie Rangel and Sen. Charles Schumer are enthusiastic about the proposal, which is wending its way through congressional committees.

#### *Responding to their audience*

Most business sectors in New York know that the best they can do for themselves and for the economy is to get back to work producing the same products. But the arts are different. People turn to them in difficult times for solace and escape from daily worries. None of the organizations we spoke with were going about business as usual. The children's museums in Brooklyn, Manhattan and Staten Island, and the Queens-based New York Hall of Science all decided within one hour of the attack to open for free on the weekend. The Metropolitan Museum of Art held free concerts to welcome New Yorkers with a place to gather and relax.

Many community-rooted organizations immediately put new

programs into effect. The Brooklyn Public Library has completely shifted its book-purchasing orders and is focusing on issues related to prejudice, Islam and speaking to children about violence. The Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning in Queens is revamping all its curricula to deal with racial diversity and allow for dialogue about the events of September 11. Virginia LeMelle, of the Jamaica Center, which serves more than 65,000 children annually with programs that range from drama to dance classes, said of the changes, "Of course we responded. We are a c  
In its efforts to recover from the events of September 11, the city has already cut the Department of Cultural Affairs' budget by 15 percent, and much of planned capital spending is likely to be eliminated. Yet New York City's vibrant cultural life is crucial both to the city's economic future and to the quality of life in every borough. How do we reconcile these competing priorities? The following recommendations will help shore up the city's arts sector without costing the city an extra dime.

# Recommendations

## Memo to Future Mayor Mike Bloomberg

- **Integrate arts and culture into the rebuilding effort.** Before September 11, lower Manhattan had gradually evolved into a cultural center, offering city residents and tourists alike a range of impressive museums and cutting-edge performances. Don't turn back the clock on the area's evolving mix business, residential and cultural life by focusing re-building efforts and incentives exclusively on building office towers and bringing back for-profit businesses.
- **Make arts policy part of your economic development plan.** This does not mean overhauling DCA's budget structure, but it might mean carving out a slice of the department's budget for more sector-oriented spending, to be done in consultation with agencies such as the Economic Development Corporation, the Department of City Planning and the MTA. Currently, the city has no real overarching cultural policy, let alone one connected to economic development. Now would be a good time to recognize the arts as a vital economic sector and to institute a policy geared toward supporting and promoting the city's cultural life in all five boroughs.
- **Don't gut cultural funding.** New York's funding of arts and culture is generally relatively strong, and the city has made significant capital commitments to organizations several years into the future. For obvious reasons, a number of these commitments must and should be withdrawn, but that doesn't mean arts funding should be viewed as an easy target for budget cuts. Policy experts who witnessed the physical and economic rebuilding of Los Angeles and Oakland in the 1990s say that restoring denizens' "quality of life" was the key to bringing those cities back from the brink. While the urge to make massive, across-the-board cuts to cultural funding may be strong, it is also shortsighted and will ultimately hurt New York City's economic viability and vitality.
- **Be a cultural ambassador for New York City.** Highlight New York's vibrant cultural life by going to plays, dance performances and art galleries in all five boroughs. Our arts base is as deep as it is broad, with layers and layers of emerging and neighborhood-based artists contributing as much to the city's cultural bedrock as do our major institutions. As mayor, go to an arts and culture event or exhibit once a week, not just when you're given free tickets to a big show on opening night. Not only will it be a public service, but you'll have fun, you'll probably learn something, and you'll get to skip some of those interminable rubber-chicken dinners!