



## **Come on down to the waterfront**

### **Theater, music, film and art are among the more than 500 events planned along Canalside and the Buffalo River**

By **Colin Dabkowski**

News Arts Critic

For many years, the most popular events of Buffalo's hyperactive summer culture have been held in certain expected places:

It's a given, for instance, that crowds will flock weekly to the grassy median at Elmwood Avenue and Bidwell Parkway for Tuesday concerts. Like clockwork, Main Street in Lewiston will come alive during the village's art and jazz fests. Allentown swelled to bursting with visitors to the massive Allentown Art Festival earlier this month and will swell again during the offbeat Infringement Festival in late July and early August.

But this year, in addition to serving its normal haunts extraordinarily well, the culture of summer in Buffalo has staked its claim on the waterfront. And not just at the newly bustling Canalside, but in the century-old grain elevators along Ohio Street and in small riverfront parks previously far beyond local culture vultures' radar screens.

After a successful tryout during the summer of 2011, the idyllic boardwalk and park at Canalside will host hundreds of events over the next two months. And thanks to a new initiative from the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, spaces along the Buffalo River and the Ohio Street Corridor will come alive with cultural activity.

As part of its plan to populate the city's revived waterfront spaces during the warm months, the Erie County Harbor Development Corporation and its partners have sponsored and scheduled in

excess of 500 separate events for unexpected spaces, some of which were little more than vacant lots just a few years ago.

Perhaps most significant is Thursday at the Square's graceful transition to Thursday at the Harbor and the relocation of several festivals, including the Irish Festival in August and Buffalo Citybration this weekend, to Canalside.

But the activities slated for these reimagined waterfront spaces go far beyond the proven draw of rock concerts. Many of the offbeat and experimental cultural events planned for Canalside and beyond this summer are signs of a concerted effort to reactivate a long-dormant slice of some of the city's most naturally beautiful land. They're also a welcome showcase for the sort of diverse cultural offerings that seem to be deepening and broadening by the month in this arts-friendly city.

At Canalside, for instance, urban activist and businessman Mark Goldman has put together "Art In the Ruins," a series of art, theater and music events for Sundays and Mondays to take place at the partially excavated ruins near the Commercial Slip. Highlights include performances from Torn Space, Ujima and puppeteer Michele Costa, along with concerts by the Genkin Philharmonic and Babik.

Goldman's series, launched with a \$20,000 grant from the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation, includes 13 weeks of programming. Goldman said the series' price tag, combined with the niche-oriented nature of the programming, appeals directly to his much-touted "lighter, quicker, cheaper" philosophy.

"The site is very interesting, and the level of programming, we're trying to raise it a little bit, get it away from the meat-and-potatoes stuff and make it a little more sophisticated," he said. "It appeals to me on a lot of different levels. It's culturally interesting, it's entrepreneurially interesting, it's an interesting use of public funds as a way of leveraging other development. It all comes together for me."

Hundreds of other projects from a range of local arts organizations will also take place at Canalside, including history-based performances by MusicalFare Theatre actor Nick Russo as Gov. DeWitt Clinton and an extensive range of cultural activities for children on Saturdays and Sundays sponsored by Young Audiences of Western New York. Canalside will also host theater performances of many types, historical tours, archaeological digs and performances by members of the Colored Musicians Club.

The full list of Canalside events, far too extensive to print in its entirety, is online at [www.eriecanalharbor.com](http://www.eriecanalharbor.com).

### **Along the river**

Meanwhile, more than 130 events planned for locations along the Buffalo River, programmed by the newly formed Arts Services Initiative and funded by the harbor development corporation, will draw crowds to even more of the city's waterfront land. Buffalo River events get started in

earnest in July at Silo City, River Fest Park and Mutual Riverfront Park. Tod Kniazuk, the executive director of the Arts Services Initiative, said his organization's approach to programming the Buffalo River series was intended to present as broad a range as possible of Buffalo's many diverse cultural organizations.

"You've got some very good, established cultural organizations who are doing programming. You also have some first-timers, some individual artists. I think that was because we really wanted to try to do this of the mind of being inclusive and giving opportunities, while at the same time protecting the public money," Kniazuk said.

"What's great about the Buffalo River is that it's not one site," he added.

Silo City, a complex of grain elevators being utilized by various arts organizations, will see major projects including two films screened as part of Bruce Jackson's Buffalo Film Seminars ("It's kind of like the drive-in reimagined," Kniazuk said) on Aug. 3 and 17 and events like Emerging Leaders in the Arts Buffalo's huge "City of Night" art party planned for Sept. 8.

Also at Silo City, Goldman will present "American Grain Reimagined" in Marine A, a gargantuan grain elevator in the Silo City complex, on Aug. 25. That event is a multidisciplinary collaboration between the University at Buffalo's music department, Buffalo State College's communication department, Torn Space Theater and the Nimbus Dance.

"Since the 2011 annual meeting of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the structure, with its endless rows of 110-foot high silos, has begun to attract the kind of attention that it deserves," Goldman wrote in an email. "In all the growing talk about how to best re-purpose it, nothing better suits the space than to use it as a setting for performance art of all kinds. With its most haunting acoustics, the most dramatic shapes and lines, the most intriguing angles of light, Marine A has no rival—anywhere—as a performance space for the arts."

Other highlights of the Buffalo River events include historical bicycle tours through the Old First Ward every Sunday; walking tours at Mutual River Front Park on Mondays; theater performances by Lenny Ziolkowski; fire dancing from popular local troupe Pyromancy; and Squeaky Wheel's Hands-On Movie Nights every third Thursday of the summer in River Fest Park.

## Ten cultural highlights

More than 500 events are planned for Canalside and along the Buffalo River during the summer months. A full list of Canalside events is online at [www.eriecanalharbor.com](http://www.eriecanalharbor.com). The full list of events scheduled for locations along the Buffalo River is at [www.asiwny.org](http://www.asiwny.org).

Here are 10 personal picks of some of the more intriguing cultural events planned for Buffalo's waterfront this summer.

- “Ode to the Buffalo River,” an original piece composed and performed by Reynold Scott with Unusually Different, 1 p.m. July 6 in River Fest Park.
- Genkin Philharmonic, July 9 at the Ruins at Canalside.
- Squeaky Wheel’s “Hands-On Movie Night,” an interactive movie screening, 7:30 p.m. July 19 in River Fest Park.
- Sketching and photography field trips, presented by Locust Street Neighborhood Art Classes, Aug. 2 and 9 and Sept. 15 and 22 at Silo City.
- The Buffalo Film Seminars’ “Noir Nights at Silo City,” featuring screenings of “The Third Man” on Aug. 3 and “The Night of the Hunter” on Aug. 17 in Silo City.
- Performance by New York City-based dancer and choreographer Mikeda Thomas, Aug. 18 and 19 at the Ruins at Canalside
- “Blanche Dubois in the Ruins,” a theater performance by Torn Space Theater, 6 p.m. Aug. 19 at the Ruins at Canalside.
- “American Grain Reimagined,” a performance combining dance and theater, 6 p.m. Aug. 25 in the Marine A grain elevator at Silo City.
- Hispanic Youth Music Project, performance of pan-Latin music by local students on Sept. 7, 14 and 28 and Oct. 12 in River Fest Park.
- “City of Night,” an ambitious art party thrown by Emerging Leaders in the Arts Buffalo, Sept. 8 in Silo City.

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