



New York Family Fun



When
there's a chill in the air
and the lights begin to sparkle,

it's time to bring the family to New York City. Smell the sawdust and chuckle at the clowns at not one but two top-notch circuses. Watch the curtain rise on a colorful musical, either on or Off Broadway. Rekindle childhood memories with a visit to the ballet, Rockefeller Center or Radio City Music Hall. Better still, combine a day — or two, or even three — of timeless holiday fare with a smorgasbord of new films, dance performances and museum exhibits.





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Photo: Julie Maris-Semel

Worth Braving the Crowds For



Every kid should get the chance to breathe in the excitement of a big parade, and New York is renowned for two of the very biggest. If your family treasures zany adventures, don your craziest costumes and head to Greenwich Village tonight for the 31st annual **New York's Village Halloween Parade** (www.halloween-nyc.com). The event — irreverent but largely kid-friendly — begins at 7 p.m. at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Spring Street, and proceeds straight up Sixth Avenue to 23rd Street. Be there or be square!

This year let someone else roast the turkey while you and the kids gape at the giant balloons and high-stepping marching bands at the 78th Annual **Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade** (www.macysparade.com) on Nov. 25. Billed as the longest-running show on Broadway, this old-fashioned chestnut still promises a frosty morning full of thrills, especially on a windy day. The parade kicks off at 9 a.m. at 77th Street and Central Park West, but officials suggest arriving as early as 6 a.m., lawn chairs and hot chocolate in tow, to secure a choice viewing spot.

clockwise from top left: Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade; Christmas tree at Lincoln Center; dance number from Broadway's "42nd Street"; holiday train show at New York Botanical Garden; New York City Ballet in "George Balanchine's The Nutcracker."

cover page: Big Apple Circus's Yasmine Smart and her Arabian stallions; Rockefeller Center angels.



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Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland



holiday lights and music set the city aglow this season. On Nov. 29 from 5:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., **Lincoln Center** hosts its free annual tree-lighting event at Josie Robertson Plaza, adjacent to the fountain at Columbus Avenue and 64th Street.

The **Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree**, in all its gigantic glory, will light up this year on Nov. 30 at 8:50 p.m. as part of the annual holiday show at Rockefeller Center (Fifth Avenue between 49th and 50th Streets, www.rockefellercenter.com). You'll have the chance to skate under its branches — or simply stand beneath it and stare — through Jan. 6.

At the **New York Botanical Garden's Holiday Train Show**, famous city landmarks like the Brooklyn Bridge, City Hall and the Statue of Liberty are cunningly recreated from leaves, twigs, berries, pinecones, cinnamon sticks and other botanical resources, and set along the model train's winding tracks. The exhibition will stretch across more than 6,000 square feet at the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory from Nov. 19 to Jan. 9 (Bronx River Parkway and Fordham Road in the Bronx, 718/817-8700, www.nybg.org).

And from Nov. 19 to Jan. 5, the **Bronx Zoo** (Bronx River Parkway and Fordham Road, 718/367-1010, www.bronxzoo.com) will sparkle with miles of brightly lit animal sculptures and ornamental trees.





Photo: Nan Melville

Visions of Sugar Plums



The city's most esteemed cultural institutions get positively kid-friendly during the holidays. For many families, this is the ideal time to introduce their offspring to the pleasures of a live dance performance.

This year, **New York City Ballet** celebrates the 50th anniversary of its much-loved classic, "George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*™." Chosen by Balanchine as his first full-evening production for NYCB, the ballet has been performed annually since its premiere in 1954. Today, the NYCB version is widely recognized as the holiday gold standard. Highlights include a one-ton Christmas tree that grows to 40 feet, an onstage snowstorm and hundreds of elaborate costumes, including one for Mother Ginger that is nine feet wide and weighs 85 pounds. Underscoring the true importance of family, the production features all of the company's 150 dancers and musicians, as well as two alternating casts of 50 children from NYCB's official School of American Ballet. Performances, sponsored by Wachovia, begin on Nov. 26 and continue through Jan. 2 at Lincoln Center's New York State Theater. Tickets are available at the theater box office (Columbus Avenue at 63rd Street), through Ticketmaster, or online at www.nycballet.com.

With its roots in blues, gospel and jazz, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** has been acclaimed as an American cultural icon. Today, the company thrives under the artistic direction of former soloist Judith Jamison,

this page, from top:
Alvin Ailey American
Dance Theater in
"Juba"; New York
Theatre Ballet's
"Carnival of the
Animals."

opposite page, top
and bottom: New
York City Ballet's
"George Balanchine's
"The Nutcracker."





who is passionate about bringing the arts to children. In December, Alvin Ailey reprises its popular MasterCard Family Matinee series, with special discounts on Wednesday and Saturday afternoon performances at City Center (West 55th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues): Buy two \$75 tickets and get up to two more for \$49 each, or buy two \$25 tickets and get up to two more for \$15 each. Following the performances, the entire audience is invited to participate in a Q. and A. session with the Ailey dancers.

To purchase tickets, visit the City Center box office or call CityTix (212/581-1212; or toll-free outside New York City, 877/581-1212). For performance schedules and ticket information, visit www.alvinailey.org or www.citycenter.org.

"If ever there were such a thing as a 'starter ballet,' these are it," says Diana Byer, artistic director of the **New York Theatre Ballet**. The company's delightfully accessible Once Upon a Ballet series makes even the littlest tykes feel the magic of dance. These enchanting one-hour productions, for children ages 3 and up, are performed in the intimate setting of Florence Gould Hall at the French Institute (55 East 59th Street). This winter, the company will perform the timeless favorite "The Nutcracker," during which little audience members learn steps from the ballet at their seats. Later in the season, NYTB presents "Cinderella," "Carnival of the Animals" and a new ballet revue called "Mother GOOSE!" which fairly bursts with dazzling sets and spectacular costumes. The Once Upon a Ballet series is \$85 for children 12 and under and \$105 for adults. Series subscriptions can be purchased through the box office (212/355-6160) or by mail. For schedules and information,

or to purchase single tickets, call the box office (212/355-6160) or Ticketmaster (212/307-4100), or visit www.nytb.org.

Photo: Paul Kolnik



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Holy Cotton Candy!



In the New York phrase book, no entry exists for “too much of a good thing.” That’s why lucky kids and their families can experience a double scoop of live-action thrills when two of the world’s best circuses come to town.

From Oct. 21 to Jan. 9, **Big Apple Circus** pitches its tent at Lincoln Center with an all-new show, “Picturesque.” Billed as an homage to the world’s great artists, this always charming and intimate one-ring show is a vibrant — and frequently funny — feast for the senses. This year, performers include a female trapeze duo from Mongolia; delightful trained dogs and cats from Russia; and sassy “Grandma,” a character from the good old U.S.A. Tickets are available through Centercharge, Ticketmaster and the circus box office, located in front of the big top on Broadway at 63rd Street. For complete information, visit www.bigapplecircus.org.

Hold on to your popcorn, because the 135th edition of **Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey** circus is also coming to arenas in the New York area later this winter. This year, you can dart down to the performance area an hour before showtime to try your hand at astonishing circus skills or pick up tips from the acrobats on staying fit. Tickets for the classic three-ring extravaganza go on sale on Jan. 23 for performances at Continental Airlines Arena (March 9 – 14), Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum (March 16 – 21) and Madison Square Garden (March 24 – April 10). For complete information, visit www.ringling.com.



More
than 500 pieces
of dazzling American
Indian jewelry celebrate
the beauty, power and
symbolism of this
magnificent
tradition.

Museum Highlights

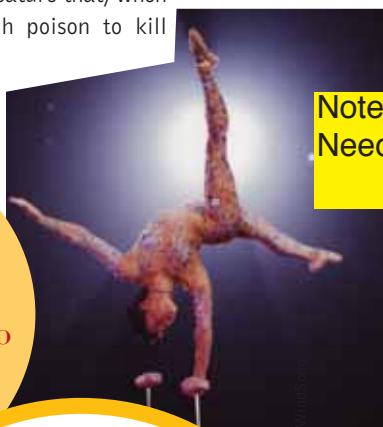


It's no wonder that adults and kids alike clamor to return to the **American Museum of Natural History** time and again (Central Park West at 79th Street, 212/769-5100, www.amnh.org). This venerable institution remains on the cutting edge with its ever-changing roster of fascinating programs and exhibits. In addition to the popular dinosaur halls and the Rose Center for Earth and Space, new offerings include "Totems to Turquoise," an exhibition running through July 2005 that presents more than 500 pieces of dazzling American Indian jewelry and celebrates the beauty, power and symbolism of this magnificent tradition. In "Frogs: A Chorus of Colors" (through Jan. 9), you can view more than 200 live specimens, from the inch-long mantella to the enormous African bullfrog. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a vivarium housing 75 poison dart frogs in a rainbow of hues, including one golden creature that, when not raised in captivity, contains enough poison to kill 20,000 mice or 10 people.

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phrase book, no
listing exists for "too
much of a good
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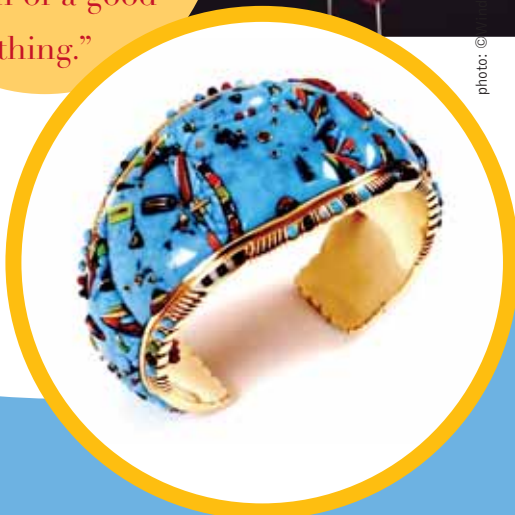
opposite page, from top:
Ringling Bros. and Barnum
& Bailey circus; audience
participation at Ringling Bros.
and Barnum & Bailey circus; Big
Apple Circus' sassy "Grandma,"
Barry Lubin.

this page: Big Apple Circus' Mei
Ling; Navajo "Blessings" bracelet
on view at the American Museum
of Natural History.



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photo: ©





Theatrical Delights



For millions of people, the "Radio City Christmas Spectacular," starring the high-kicking Rockettes, is the ultimate Christmas spectacle in New York. The 2004 edition, presented by JP Morgan Chase, returns to the Great Stage from Nov. 4 to Jan. 2 with traditions like the Parade of the Wooden Soldiers and the Living Nativity intact. New treats this year will include a 3-D movie ride through the city on Santa's sleigh; a celebrity "weather forecast;" and shimmering new sets, costumes and performances by the incomparable Rockettes. Tickets range from \$39 to \$95 and are available at the Radio City box office (50th Street and Avenue of the Americas, 212/ 247-4777), through the Ticketmaster Christmas Hotline (212/307-1000) or online at www.radiocity.com.

Another winter treat for the whole family is a virtual visit to the Great Barrier Reef in "Disney On IceSM Presents Disney/Pixar's Finding Nemo." In this innovative production, the audience is "submerged" under the sea as talented skaters and spectacular sets recreate the story of Nemo, the curious clown fish, and his overprotective father, Marlin, as they embark on an aquatic adventure. The show runs from Nov. 16 to Nov. 21 at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum (516/794-9300) and from Nov. 23 to Nov. 28 at Continental Airlines Arena (201/935-3900). Tickets can also be purchased through Ticketmaster.

Later, return to the ice with tour guides Mickey and Minnie to explore the enchanting worlds of Disney's "Lilo & Stitch," "The Little

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this page, clockwise from top left: "Disney On IceSM Presents Disney/Pixar's Finding Nemo"; a scene from "Children's Letters to God"; a scene from "Santa Meets the Ice Dragon."

opposite page, from top: "Disney On IceSM Presents Mickey & Minnie's Magical Journey"; the Rockettes in the "Radio City Christmas Spectacular."

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Mermaid," "101 Dalmatians" and "Peter Pan" in "Disney On IceSM Presents Mickey & Minnie's Magical Journey," the second offering in the Disney On Ice 2004 season. Catch the show at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum Jan. 18 through Jan. 23 and at Continental Airlines Arena Jan. 25 through Jan. 30.

It's Christmas! Everyone is cheerful except 12-year-old Max. Suddenly, a gust of icy wind extinguishes all the streetlights, and the atmosphere changes. What could possibly have happened to make the holiday disappear? Find out as you join Max on his journey to Santa Land in "Santa Meets the Ice Dragon," an original musical making its American debut from Dec. 10 to Dec. 28 at the Beacon Theatre (Broadway and 74th Street). This successful European production, narrated by Bob McGrath of "Sesame Street," incorporates an old-fashioned story with an enchanting symphonic score and magical costumes and sets. For tickets, call the box office (212/496-7070) or contact Ticketmaster.

"Dear God. How did you know you were God?" "Are you really invisible or is that just a trick?" These are just a couple of the thought-provoking questions behind "Children's Letters to God," a charming new Off-Broadway musical based on the best-selling book of the same name. Taken directly from kids' actual correspondence to "The Big G," the show features five young actors who take the audience on a journey through the joys and concerns of growing up. Performances are at The Lamb's Theatre (130 West 44th Street). For tickets, visit the theater box office, call Telecharge or visit www.childrensletterstogod.com.

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Musical Enchantments



With an enduring score and lyrics by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, the musical version of “**Cinderella**” has enchanted audiences since it was first performed on television in 1957. Now **New York City Opera** will present Rodgers and Hammerstein’s adaptation of the classic fairy tale in a lavish production designed to make opera delightful for young listeners. Performances will run from Nov. 12 through Nov. 21 at Lincoln Center’s New York State Theater (Columbus Avenue at 63rd Street, 212/496-0600, www.nycopera.com). As an additional treat, New York City Opera will host a Cinderella Family Ball following the Nov. 14 matinee performance. Guests will be able to sit in Cinderella’s coach, try on her glass slipper and nibble on the finest fare. For ticket information, contact the opera’s Special Events Department at 212/870-5627.





Lincoln Center offers still more for young audiences this winter. Now in its 39th season, the **Great Performers** series launches a new Saturday afternoon event, Family Musik. Hosted by the engaging composer and conductor Robert Kapilow, the series kicks off at Alice Tully Hall on Dec. 11 at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. with "Green Eggs and Hamadeus," a playful merging of the Dr. Seuss classic with Mozart's masterpiece "Eine kleine Nachtmusik." The series will continue with two spring programs: "Peter and the Wolf" with the Pickle Shoe dancers on Feb. 5; and Kapilow's "Gertrude McFuzz," paired with Stefan Wolpe's "Lazy Andy Ant," on March 5. Tickets are on sale at the Avery Fisher Hall box office (65th Street and Broadway), through Centercharge and online at www.lincolncenter.org.

Guests
will be able to
sit in Cinderella's
coach, try on her glass
slipper and nibble
on the finest
fare. 

opposite page, from top: Lincoln Center's "Green Eggs and Hamadeus"; New York City Opera's "Cinderella."

this page, from top: a holiday performance at Lincoln Center; the fountains at Lincoln Center.



On the Big Screen



Finally, what would holiday time be without a big bucket of popcorn and a blockbuster family movie? On Nov. 5, Disney Pictures releases the animated feature **"The Incredibles"** (www.disney.go.com/disneypictures/incredibles), a story about an overweight, retired superhero (Mr. Incredible, played by Craig T. Nelson) and his dysfunctional superhero family. Their boring existence is turned upside down when Mr. Incredible must return to work to save the planet. The movie also features the voices of Samuel L. Jackson, Holly Hunter and Jason Lee.



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above and below: scenes from "The Incredibles."

