



First Fridays at the Frick

MUSIC AL FRESCO

BY MARY S. GILBERT

"Summer's here and the time is right for dancin' in the street."

Surely Martha and the Vandellas summed up how many of us feel when they sang those memorable lyrics.

"All we need is music, sweet music, there'll be music everywhere."

That breezy, swaying, finger-snapping tune is the perfect soundtrack to herald the start of the outdoor concert season. As much anticipated as warm weather and blue skies, concerts under the stars or in the bright sunshine are a veritable summer ritual, beckoning neighbors to green parks and neighborhood streets for a rollicking good time in celebration of live music.

Throughout the East End and the Fox Chapel area, open-air concert venues are plentiful, and the music is diverse. So gather your favorite blanket, friends and family, and perhaps a picnic basket brimming with homemade goodies, and head for any or all of these outdoor concerts.

First Fridays at the Frick

For 19 years, the expansive and verdant Great Lawn of the Frick Art & Historical Center in Point Breeze has been home to one of Pittsburgh's most eagerly awaited and enduring summer traditions. Its name—First Fridays at the Frick—gives the date and place, and the time is 7 p.m.

The range of musical styles and genres over the years has been eclectic. Think brass, bluegrass, jazz, reggae, and even a performance of multi-phonic singing by the Drepung Loseling monks of Tibet, which generated a record attendance.

While the selection of acts generally has no tie to museum exhibitions, an appearance two years ago by the St. Petersburg String Quartet was aligned with the opening of a Fabergé decorative arts show. That outdoor concerts would be so integral to the programming at the Frick speaks to the history of this famed property.

The Frick estate was the childhood home of Helen Clay Frick, daughter of 19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick. Her vision of preserving the family home, Clayton, and the surrounding grounds included the art museum with an auditorium for concerts because she loved music. In a foreshadowing of things to come, archival records indicate that President Teddy Roosevelt visited Clayton one Independence Day, and a military-style band played music by John Phillips Sousa as part of the program.

"When First Fridays at the Frick was born, we felt it was in line with Miss Frick's affinities and what she'd like the site to be used for," explains Greg Langel, media and marketing manager.

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Undoubtedly, Helen Clay Frick would be both surprised and delighted at the result. The first Friday of every month from June through September brings overflowing crowds of some 3,000 people to the grounds. The Frick's education department welcomes children with creative, hands-on art projects. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. so visitors can also experience the other facilities on site.

While some cart their own picnics, others delight in purchasing dinner from The Café at the Frick. Chef Seth Bailey prepares a select menu of light seasonal fare.

This year's free concert lineup consists of: Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artists, June 7; guitarist Robert Michaels, July 5; Matrimony, an indie folk group, August 2; and Axiom Brass Quintet, September 6.

Jam on Walnut

Twenty-five years ago, Muzz Meyers and Bobby Feldman, owners of The Balcony, the storied Shadyside restaurant and nightclub that was a centerpiece of Pittsburgh's jazz scene, decided to hold a fundraising concert on Walnut Street for cystic fibrosis because Feldman's son had the disease.

Although The Balcony is long gone, their event—Jam on Walnut—continues as both a signature summer concert and fundraiser for the Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Foundation's Western Pennsylvania Chapter.



Jam on Walnut

Occurring one Saturday during each summer month, this free mega block party shuts down six blocks of Walnut Street from 7 to 11 p.m. for a night of fun, food, drinks and hot rock 'n' roll bands from across Pittsburgh. A melting pot of an audience numbers around 10,000 each night. Many bars and restaurants stay open, as do some retailers, which often display CF Foundation-labeled tip jars in a show of support. Participants ages 21 and older can buy wristbands for \$3 to drink beer.

Jam on Walnut is now a fixture on summer calendars, according to William Penn Tavern owner Richard Rattner, who is president of the Shadyside Chamber of Commerce and event organizer with the CF Foundation.

"Anytime you get people out of their houses and into a happy venue, it makes for a stronger neighborhood," Rattner says. "As the Chamber of an affluent neighborhood, this is a way to give back to the community and give money to an excellent charity."

Sara Steele, development manager at CF Foundation, notes that Jam on Walnut raises about \$40,000. Volunteers from the nonprofit sell the wristbands and staff an information table. A bigger focus this year will be securing a variety of food vendors.

The scheduled bands are: Kelsey Friday and Dancing Queen (headlining), June 29; Donora and Radio Tokyo (headlining), July 27; and Abacus Jones and Chris Higbee (headlining), August 17.

WYEP Summer Music Festival and Final Fridays

91.3FM WYEP, a nationally recognized adult album, alternative public radio station, definitely knows music. So how better to serve its listeners and would-be listeners than with free summer concerts?

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community with diverse music and vibrant ideas,” says Suzanne Meyer, WYEP director of marketing.

That credo is what drives the WYEP Summer Music Festival, which will kick off June 28 at 6 p.m., and Final Fridays at 6:30 p.m. on July 26, August 30, and September 27. All events take place at Schenley Plaza in Oakland.

Meyer anticipates that the 16th annual WYEP Summer Music Festival will draw more than 10,000 people to the covered stage set up on the plaza’s sprawling lawn. The show starts with a local act and then brings on two national acts. Such esteemed artists as Dr. Dog, Great Lake Swimmers, Donora, Moe, and Sinead O’Connor have performed.

The festival also features a family area. I Made It! Market, a nomadic indie crafts marketplace, sells locally-sourced handmade wares. Organizations like the Carnegie Science Center set up a variety of children’s art activities.

The Final Fridays series usually brings in smaller breakthrough bands or single artists. These concerts are solely about the music. With smaller crowds numbering around 4,000, the mood is more relaxed and intimate.

A new addition for both series is a partnership with Bike Pittsburgh, which will offer bike valet services to coincide with the organization’s Car Free Fridays.

Concerts in the Wall

Each summer, the Aspinwall Civic Association hosts a concert series just for children, along with a concert series geared for adults, as part of its free Concerts in the Wall program. The name is a catchy riff on “Aspinwall.”

The first Thursday of the month from May to September from 6 to 8 p.m. is for the kids; the third Thursday in those same months from 7 to 9 p.m. is for the adults. Both have a local flavor in this friendly walking community.

For the kids, the civic association blocks off Loop Street and brings in a deejay playing age-appropriate music, a bubble machine, a magician, and hula hoops.

“It’s quite something to see the kids enjoying the limbo, line dancing, the hokey pokey,



and the Macarena,” says Aspinwall councilman and concert co-organizer Joe Giuffre. “Usually the parents join in because they feel they can get a little looser with their kids.”

New this year will be a nine-hole miniature golf course. A photo opportunity with ponies will be added as a throwback to an earlier time. Decades ago, the borough also brought in ponies for kids to have their photos taken astride the animals, an activity that Giuffre fondly remembers as the Aspinwall Rough Riders.

“Back then, families knew everyone on the block, and it isn’t that way today, so the concerts help in that regard,” he says. “For the younger families, it’s an inexpensive evening out. They don’t have to load kids into car seats and drive away, and they can walk home in minutes.”

The adult series takes place on Brilliant Avenue in the heart of the borough’s commercial district. Local musicians, including George Marsico, owner of Aspinwall Beans

Allegheny County Summer Concert Series

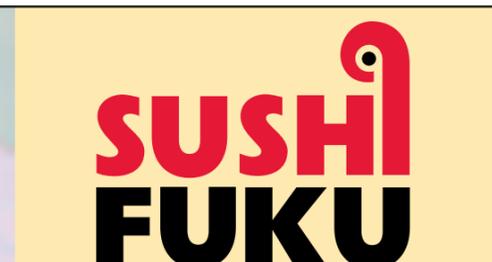
To help draw people into Hartwood Acres—a 629-acre preserve straddling Indiana and Hampton townships—the Allegheny County Parks Departments holds the free Allegheny County Summer Concert Series at Middle Road field. The schedule this year is every Sunday at 7:30 p.m. from June 2 to September 1.

“The concert series is a great gift to the taxpayers and an affordable night out—a nice, economical way to have a beautiful summer evening,” says Bill Deasy, special events manager for Allegheny County and the event organizer.

Started in the 1970s, the event had a narrower focus as more of a wine and cheese



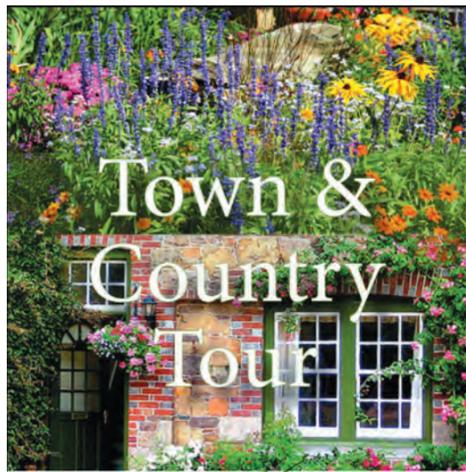
‘N’ Cream, and Niefs Hotel Band, are past performers. The merchants tend to stay open longer on concert days, with some setting up tents to offer pizza and gyros, and various church groups sell funnel cakes.

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gathering with classical music. It slowly broadened its musical scope and even added an annual dance performance by the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.

The series is known for its musical variety, including blues, rock, jazz, Broadway, and classical styles. Deasy books a balanced mix of local and national acts. The series has a knack for showcasing performers on the cusp of bigger stardom, including Mary Chapin Carpenter, Grace Potter and the Nocturnals, and Dixie Chicks. Also look for a variety of games and activities for children, including the ever-popular corn hole.

As much as Deasy himself enjoys the performances, he tends to savor the natural setting above all.

"Hartwood Acres is idyllic and magical," he enthuses. "The night Spyro Gyra played, there was something extra special about the colors in the sky as the sun was going down, and they made everyone stop and look at the colors."

Pittsburgh Blues Festival

Also taking place at Hartwood Acres is the Pittsburgh Blues Festival. Like Jam on Walnut, it's music with a mission.

Now in its 19th year, the festival began as—and remains—a fundraiser for the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. The three-day festival, scheduled for July 19-21, has raised \$1.8 million to help fight hunger in the food bank's 11-county service area. The caliber of the lineup determines the ticket prices. Friday is free with a request for nonperishable food items; last year's collection neared 13 tons of donations. Prices average \$25 per day, with \$45 for a weekend pass.

Ron Esser, who owns Moondog's blues club in Blawnox, recalls that a friend came to him at the outset and asked for his help in launching the festival because of his music experience. The early years were rough going, and the organizing committee was tempted to cancel the event. But the Pittsburgh Blues



Pittsburgh Blues Festival

Jim Bernoff

Festival survived and thrived, moving to several locations before finding its true home at Hartwood Acres.

The festival relies on a devoted corps of 400 volunteers. It draws an audience of some 10,000 strong and eager to hear the likes of nationally renowned blues performers Buddy Guy, Susan Tedeschi, Johnny Winter, and The Yardbirds. A host of local and regional musicians, including Jill West, also perform. While the lead acts are paid, the local artists donate their time.

In addition to providing stellar sounds, the festival addresses the problem of hunger. According to Esser, one in seven children in Allegheny County is in danger of going to bed hungry each night. He says the food bank serves about 120,000 people monthly—enough to fill Heinz Field twice. Education is part of the festival, with on-stage discussions about hunger and a KidZone that teaches children proper nutrition.

"The blues community in Pittsburgh has really embraced the festival," Esser says. "Our local musicians not only want to play—they feel honored to play. I thank them for that because a lot of people out there are hungry and need help."

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Schenley Plaza Lunchtime Music

Can you think of a more pleasant way to spend the lunch hour than sitting outdoors on the grass or in a park chair, eating a sandwich or salad while live music plays in the background?

That's the entertaining experience available every Tuesday at lunchtime from July 9 to October 8 at Schenley Plaza, thanks to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy's lunchtime music series. The plaza is a favorite midday destination for office workers, students, medical professionals, and librarians from the neighboring businesses, hospitals, and universities in Oakland, as well as families.

"Oakland is the cultural center of Pittsburgh, and how better to connect with that and the beauty of the plaza with its garden, lawn, tent, and carousel?" asks Jim Griffin, director of facilities for the Conservancy. "Our parks are an essential,

invaluable investment and are a living, breathing entity in the life of the community."

The lunchtime concerts began six years ago as a calm, but fun mixture of live music that also invite dining and conversation among the listeners.

"It's less of a concert and more of a party," Griffin explains. "The music isn't intimidating, and it doesn't force you to listen. There's an ambiance that defines the park, an individual spirit that combines with the creative and artistic element of the music."

Musicians who have stood center stage include jazzman Sean Jones, singer/songwriter Joy Ike, Ray Ryan playing Dixieland, and the Squirrel Hillbillies. Visitors without their own brown bag can buy lunch at any of the four food kiosks in the plaza, or they can dine in, eat on the porch, or take out from The Porch restaurant.



Schenley Plaza Lunchtime Music

Bach, Beethoven & Brunch



Bach, Beethoven & Brunch

Despite bearing a classically oriented name, the Bach, Beethoven & Brunch concerts held Sunday mornings from 10:30 to noon on the lawn at Mellon Park present a wide range of musical performances. With its renovated walled garden and fountains, the park provides a picturesque setting for an outdoor concert. This summer, the series runs from June 16 to August 11.

"I'd call the music classical styling, with maybe a contemporary spin," says Brian Katze of Citiparks, which puts on the concerts with the Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition.

The acts are mostly local, such as Cellofourte, while some tour nationally and internationally. Depending on the musical group, the crowd size can range from 800 to 1,300. The majority of the audience comes from the East End, and many walk over to the park after attending church services nearby. The ages run the gamut, and the vibe is laidback.

Rodef Shalom Congregation runs an activity booth for children. The Bagel Factory

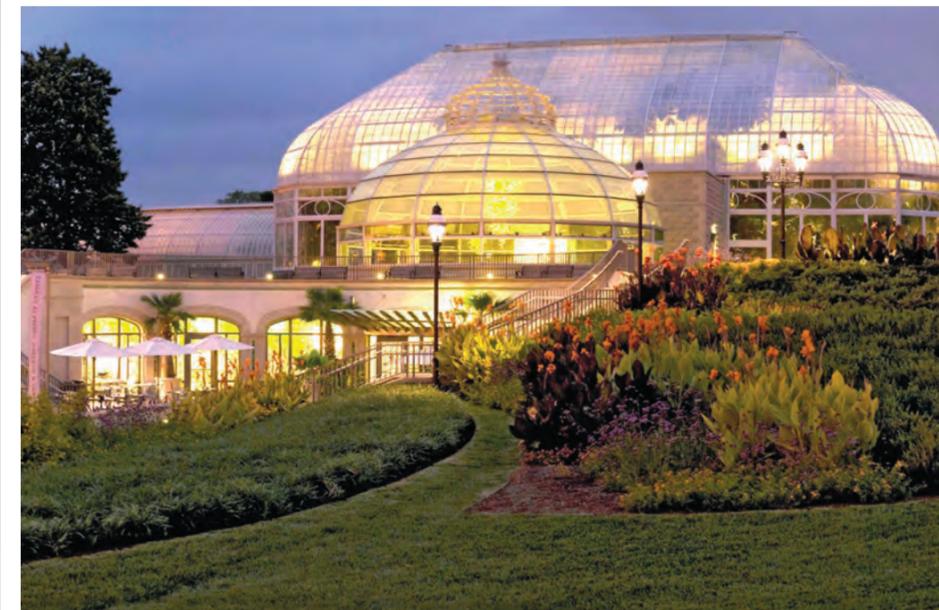
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sells bagels, pastries, and beverages. Nonprofit organizations may vie on a first-come, first-serve basis for an information booth to share their stories.

The music and setting are important to this concert series, but food claims an almost equal share of the limelight. As the name indicates, brunch has been part of event's successful formula since its inception in 1984. Organizers even hold a weekly contest for those who bring their own picnics.

Katze looks for obvious displays of food to judge. He first asks the owners if they want to participate, and then he gets the lowdown on the spread. Is the food store-bought or home-made? More weight is given to the latter. Does the party have a theme? What are you doing that's above and beyond? One enterprising gentleman hung a chandelier from a tree branch. A group of pre-med students from the University of Pittsburgh all wore their scrubs and stethoscopes. Most offer Katze a sampling,

but he politely declines, as taste isn't part of his criteria.

"The brunch contest is fun and unique," Katze says. "I don't know of any other concert that encourages people to bring picnics and then rewards them for it."

Hemlock Groove

The dual rows of soaring evergreens at Hartwood Acres' Hemlock Court are both the namesake and the lush, piney backdrop of a two-year-old concert series called Hemlock Groove. Concerts are held the second Wednesday from May through August, from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Scheduled artists this season include Matt Constantine, who plays folk and bluegrass and was the debut performer last year; Maddie Arnold, a folk musician; and Cue Ball, an Irish group.



Hemlock Groove

Bob Vishneski

The concerts are the brainchild of the Friends of Hartwood, a volunteer organization founded in 2003 to preserve and protect the natural environment and cultural heritage of Hartwood Acres. They are small and intimate in tone and setting and feature only local musicians—an intentional counterpoint to the larger Allegheny County Summer Concert Series and the Pittsburgh Blues Festival held at Middle Road field.

Hemlock Court is situated behind the stately Tudor mansion that was erected in 1929 for John and Mary Flinn Lawrence as the centerpiece of their country estate. Attendance at the concerts last year ranged from approximately 40 to 80 people, depending on the band.

Carrie Classen, vice chair of Friends of Hartwood, says Hemlock Groove fosters a sense of community and belonging.

"We wanted to do something outside in summer that enables people to enjoy the park and feel a connection with it," she says. "We wanted something laid back and on a week-night, so you can come with your picnic basket, your kids, your dog, and just relax."

While the concerts are free, there is a \$5 suggested donation for adults to raise money for park projects. Monies collected last year helped to restore the park's stables.

"My hope is that Hemlock Groove grows and becomes recognized as a fundraiser for Hartwood Acres, but that it continues to stay intimate and manageable," Classen says.

Reservoir of Jazz

As weekends in August wind down and Monday morning looms, people looking for a final respite on Sunday evenings can be found on the lawn near the reservoir in Highland Park, enjoying free jazz concerts from 5 to 7 p.m.

A program of the Highland Park Community Council in conjunction with Citiparks, Reservoir of Jazz has been a tradition going on 25 years.

Tania Grubbs, who chairs the series, deems it a priority because it helps to position Highland Park as different from neighboring

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communities. Even when the City of Pittsburgh went bankrupt several years ago and cut funding for the program, the community persevered and made the concerts happen—albeit scaled back. Grubbs sees the series as a unique way to welcome others to Highland Park and to showcase and celebrate local jazz artists.

“The concerts are a real morale builder, and we feel a sense of pride at our ability to show others our community and get them to say, ‘I’d like to live here,’” Grubbs says. “Probably some people have selected Highland Park for their home because they came to a concert and liked the energy.”

The East End has long been a hotbed of jazz, and the local greats have graced the stage—Sandy Staley, Roger Humphries, Jimmy Ponder, and the Pittsburgh Jazz Orchestra, among them. Last year, one of the programs took more of a global approach with the appearance of World Beats, and the toes were tapping.

Even rain hasn’t deterred the crowds. Grubbs remembers one “magical” night when it started raining. Kids splashed in the puddles as the adults started to dance—and everyone actually enjoyed the abrupt change in weather, she says. SA

LISTEN UP!

Allegheny County Summer Concert Series

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412-350-7275 or alleghenycounty.us/newsroom
Sundays at 7:30 p.m. from June 2 to September 1

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412-255-2493 or
pittsburghpa.gov/citiparks/bach-beethoven-brunch
Sundays from 10:30 a.m. to noon, June 16 to August 11

Concerts in the Wall

Loop Street (kids) and Brilliant Avenue (adults), Aspinwall
412-781-0213 or aspinwallpa.com
Kids concerts - first Thursday of the month from May to September, 6 to 8 p.m.
Adult concerts - third Thursday in those same months from 7 to 9 p.m.

First Fridays at the Frick

The Frick Art and Historical Center
7227 Reynolds Street, Point Breeze
412-371-0600 or thefrickpittsburgh.org
June 7, July 5, August 2 & September 6, 7:30 p.m.

Hemlock Groove

Hemlock Court at the Hartwood Acres Mansion, Indiana Township
[Facebook.com/FriendsofHartwood](https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofHartwood)
Second Wednesday of the month from May through August, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Jam on Walnut

Walnut and Bellefonte streets, Shadyside
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Kelsey Friday and Dancing Queen (headlining), June 29; Donora and Radio Tokyo (headlining), July 27; and Abacus Jones and Chris Higbee (headlining), August 17
Concerts run from 7 to 11 p.m.

Pittsburgh Blues Festival

Hartwood Acres, Middle Road field, Hampton Township
412-460-BLUE or pghblues.com
July 19-21

Reservoir of Jazz

Highland Park Reservoir, near the Highland Avenue park entrance
412-255-2493 or
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Schenley Plaza Lunchtime Music

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WYEP Summer Music Festival and Final Fridays

Schenley Plaza, Oakland
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