

WEEKEND ROUNDUP

# 7 Things to Do This Weekend

How can you get your cultural fix when many arts institutions remain closed? Our writers offer suggestions for what to listen to and watch.

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POP MUSIC

## Queen Bey Unveils ‘Black Is King’



Beyoncé in a scene from “Black Is King,” her latest visual album. It debuts Friday on Disney+. Travis Matthews

Madonna beat Beyoncé to the title “Queen of Pop,” but Beyoncé’s more open-ended honorific, “Queen Bey,” turned out to be quite fitting: These days, she hardly limits herself to just the one medium. Since 2013’s self-titled LP, her albums have been

cinematic feats as much as musical events. Her latest opus, due out on Friday, is “Black Is King,” a visual corollary to last year’s album, “The Lion King: The Gift” — itself a companion to Disney’s blockbuster remake of the 1994 animated classic.

A new chapter in her ongoing project of foregrounding Black experience in her work, the film represents the collaborative efforts of more than a dozen co-directors, including the Ghanaian filmmaker Blitz Bazawule (“The Burial of Kojo”) and Ibra Ake, Donald Glover’s longtime creative collaborator. And like the album that inspired it, “Black Is King” boasts an all-star cast that includes Naomi Campbell, Lupita Nyong’o, Kelly Rowland, Pharrell Williams and Jay-Z.

“Black Is King” premieres on Disney+ as part of an exclusive distribution deal that will bring the film to many countries in Africa. The combined might of three cultural juggernauts — Beyoncé, Disney and its leonine (and most profitable) franchise — should make for a truly spectacular global celebration of “the breadth and beauty of Black ancestry,” to borrow Beyoncé’s words.

*OLIVIA HORN*

ART & MUSEUMS

# Quilts With Stories to Tell



Bisa Butler's "Broom Jumpers" (2019), on view at the Katonah Museum of Art until Oct. 4. Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

Bisa Butler's work originates from the idea of absence. The subjects for her quilts tend to be anonymous, sometimes given little more than a designation of "Negro," which is the search term she plugged into one of the Library of Congress's photographic databases to find some of her source material.

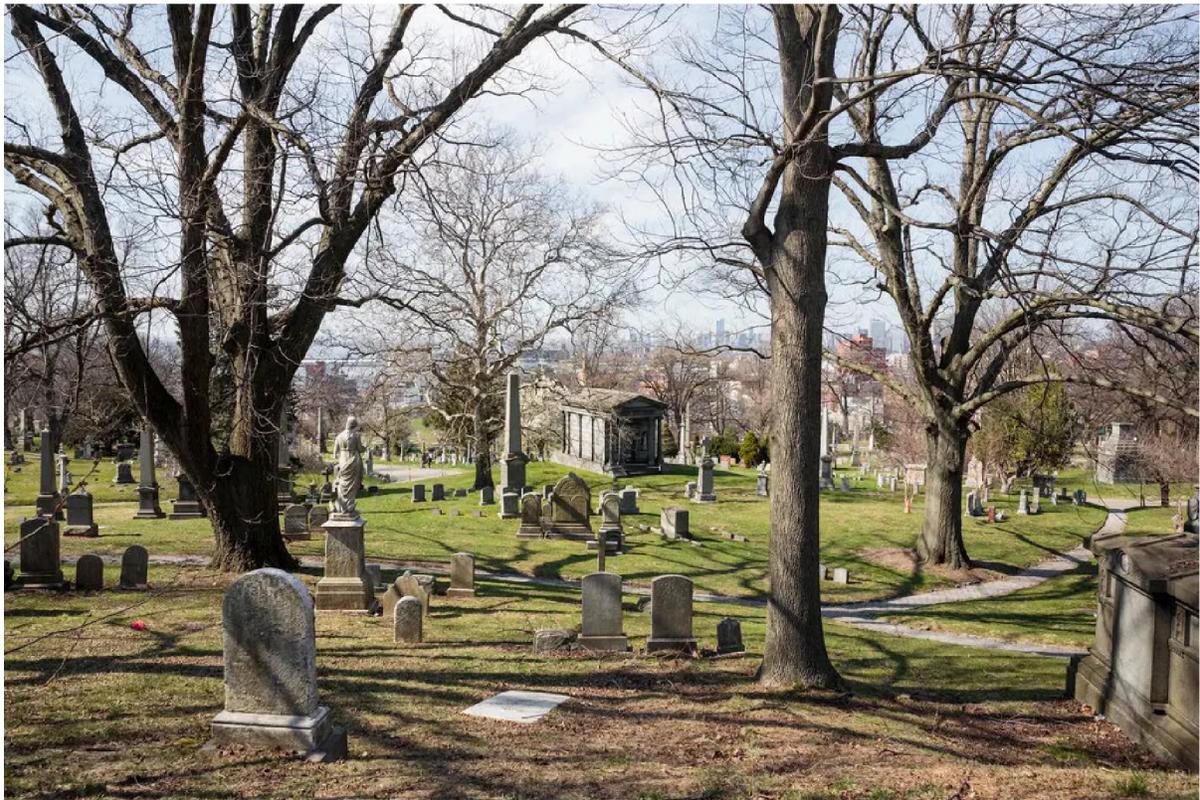
Fusing figuration with collage for the pieces in her current exhibition at the Katonah Museum of Art, “Bisa Butler: Portraits,” she used vividly patterned African fabrics to create large-scale images of Black people, reconstructing their stories and seemingly riffing on a Black tradition of oral histories that take shape through their retelling. Her work evokes the poignant, generations-old legacy of quilting in the Black community, made famous by the women of Gee’s Bend.

The Katonah Museum of Art, about 45 miles north of New York City, has reopened, so you can see the show in person through Oct. 4 (you must purchase timed tickets before your visit), or you can visit the museum’s website, whose offerings include a virtual walk-through of the galleries. On Sunday at 4 p.m. Eastern time, Butler will talk with the museum’s executive director, Michael Gitlitz, in a Zoom session available to the public for \$5; the proceeds will benefit Black Lives Matter. The discussion will focus on her works and their influences — those who have names, and the many others who do not.

*MELISSA SMITH*

THEATER

## Soundwalking Through the Graveyard



Gelsey Bell and Joseph White's immersive audio project "Cairns" takes you on a tour of Green-Wood Cemetery. Sarah Blesener for The New York Times

For many Brooklynites, Green-Wood Cemetery has emerged as a welcome oasis over the past few months; the setting, free of exercise enthusiasts, offers breathing space and quiet. Now, Gelsey Bell and Joseph White's immersive audio project "Cairns" will take visitors on a self-guided tour that not only respects the cemetery's tranquillity but also preserves social distancing.

Bell wrote and narrated the track, and composed the music with White. Her involvement makes "Cairns" particularly intriguing: In recent years, she has emerged as one of New York's most adventurous musicians, leading visitors through the Museum of Modern Art's Fluxus sound collection one day and appearing in the Dave Malloy musicals "Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812" and "Ghost Quartet" the next.

You can download "Cairns" (available for \$7 starting Friday) from Bell's Bandcamp page and the website of the performing arts center [HERE](#), which commissioned the piece. Then head to Green-Wood's Sunset Park entrance, on Fourth Avenue and 35th Street, and amble along as directed. Expect to drop by some of Green-Wood's

notable, if undersung, views and burial sites, including those of the 19th-century Native American performer Do-Hum-Me and Susan S. McKinney Steward, New York's first Black female doctor.

Not near Green-Wood? You can listen from home and be transported.

*ELISABETH VINCENTELLI*

DANCE

## Candid Talk on Cunningham's Company



Rashaun Mitchell performing Merce Cunningham's "Antic Meet" in 2011. *Andrea Mohin/The New York Times*

The weekly podcast "Dance and Stuff," hosted by the artists Jack Ferver and Reid Bartelme, is full of spirited conversation with performers, choreographers and others working in dance. But a recent pair of episodes struck a deeper chord.

A few weeks ago, Ferver and Bartelme released a two-part interview with three of the four Black dancers ever to join the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in that institution's nearly 60 years: Gus Solomons Jr., Michael Cole and Rashaun Mitchell. (The fourth, Ulysses Dove, died in 1996.)

In the first part, the dancers share their personal stories of discovering and pursuing Cunningham's work. In the second, they speak in greater depth about being the only Black company member at a given time (their tenures never overlapped) and the broader implications of the company's whiteness.

The candid, cross-generational dialogue sheds light on dimensions of Cunningham's legacy too rarely discussed on the record. And it's easy to complement these podcasts with videos. A few places to start: Learn more about Solomons in the web series "Mondays With Merce" (he's featured in Episode 14); see Cole in "Beach Birds for Camera," accessible through the Dance Capsules section of [mercecunningham.org](http://mercecunningham.org); and watch "Tesseract," Mitchell's collaboration with Silas Riener and Charles Atlas, at [OntheBoards.tv](http://OntheBoards.tv).

*SIOBHAN BURKE*

KIDS

## Standing Up to Prejudice



Davied Morales, center, as Jelani in “A Kids Play About Racism,” with, clockwise from bottom left, Isaiah Christopher-Lord Harris, Regan Sims, Moses Goods, Jessenia Ingram, Rapheal Hamilton and Angel Adedokun. Bay Area Children's Theater

Of all the difficult subjects to explain to children, racism is one of the hardest and most relevant.

Last year, Jelani Memory, a biracial author and father, took on the task with “A Kids Book About Racism,” which incorporates his own experiences. Now Khalia Davis has adapted his text into a half-hour virtual theater production, “A Kids Play About Racism,” which will be free all weekend on Broadway on Demand.

“We cast an actor who is also biracial to play Jelani at 10 years old,” said Davis, who directed the show as well. That performer is Davied Morales, who wrote the raps it includes. (Justin Ellington composed the music.) “I wanted to expand the world of the book, so he had someone to respond to,” Davis said of the Jelani character, who is surrounded by players enacting his memories and emotions.

Produced by 41 companies in the organization Theater for Young Audiences/USA, the show and accompanying educational videos will be streamable from midnight on Friday to midnight on Sunday Eastern time. (Davis hopes to make the presentation permanently available online.) Families can also register for related Zoom theater workshops on Saturday and Sunday at 1 and 3 p.m.

The play, Davis added, helps children of any background understand not only racism, but also how to “do something about it.”

**LAUREL GRAEBER**

CLASSICAL MUSIC

# Minimalism Meets Dream Pop



Molly Joyce released her debut full-length solo album, “Breaking and Entering,” in June. Shervin Lainez

After a car accident nearly resulted in the amputation of her left hand at age 7, Molly Joyce spent years in search of an instrument that would fit her body.

When the composer, who has written for virtuosos like Vicky Chow, started working with vintage toy organs, she quickly perceived the opportunities they offered her as a performer. (The buttons on a toy organ’s left side permit a musician to play a chord with one finger while navigating traditional keys with another hand on its right side.)

In a 2017 TEDx Talk, Joyce described how composing on this instrument allowed for a creative process that could move beyond the binary of ability and disability. Proof of her breakthrough is abundant throughout “Breaking and Entering,” the musician’s debut full-length solo album. In a phone interview before the recording’s release in June, Joyce cited not only early minimalists like Steve Reich and Philip Glass as stylistic touchstones, but also artists like the Cocteau Twins, Beach House and My Brightest Diamond.

Aside from her appreciation for “less vibrato, very on-pitch” singing, Joyce noted her taste for enveloping production styles that come across as a “wash” of sound. All those affections can be heard on the album’s opening track, “Body and Being,” in which sustained chords, MIDI tones and her dream-pop vocals work together to produce an airy, liberating sensation.

*SETH COLTER WALLS*

COMEDY

## A Special That Should Have Been a Contender



Gary Gulman in his 2019 HBO special, “The Great Depresh.” Craig Blankenhorn/HBO

Far be it for me to quibble with Emmy voters, but quibble I shall, because Gary Gulman, perhaps the best comedy writer in America, put out a special in the past year that's both heartfelt and hilarious, with inimitable diction holding it together, and yet the show failed to receive a nomination.

“Quibble” is one of many words Gulman employs with such unequivocal specificity in his 2019 HBO special, “The Great Depresh,” which features his stand-up at Roulette in Brooklyn, along with his conversations with stand-up colleagues at the Comedy Cellar and sessions with his psychiatrist and his wife, Sadé, at Weill Cornell Medicine. Cameras even follow Gulman back to his mother's house outside of Boston to revisit his childhood. Over the course of 70-plus minutes, Gulman demonstrates that comedians can struggle with depression without becoming sad clowns, and that if he could find help, so can you.

That he manages to do so while accentuating his punch lines with precise vocabulary sets him apart. In one of the special's early bits, he describes his experience at drinking fountains in elementary school as “fraught” and “perilous” for a “precocious” kid trying to get his full “quench” from the “iron spout” without a smack from “the cretin” behind him.

You can relish Gulman's wordplay in “The Great Depresh” on HBO Max.

*SEAN L. McCARTHY*