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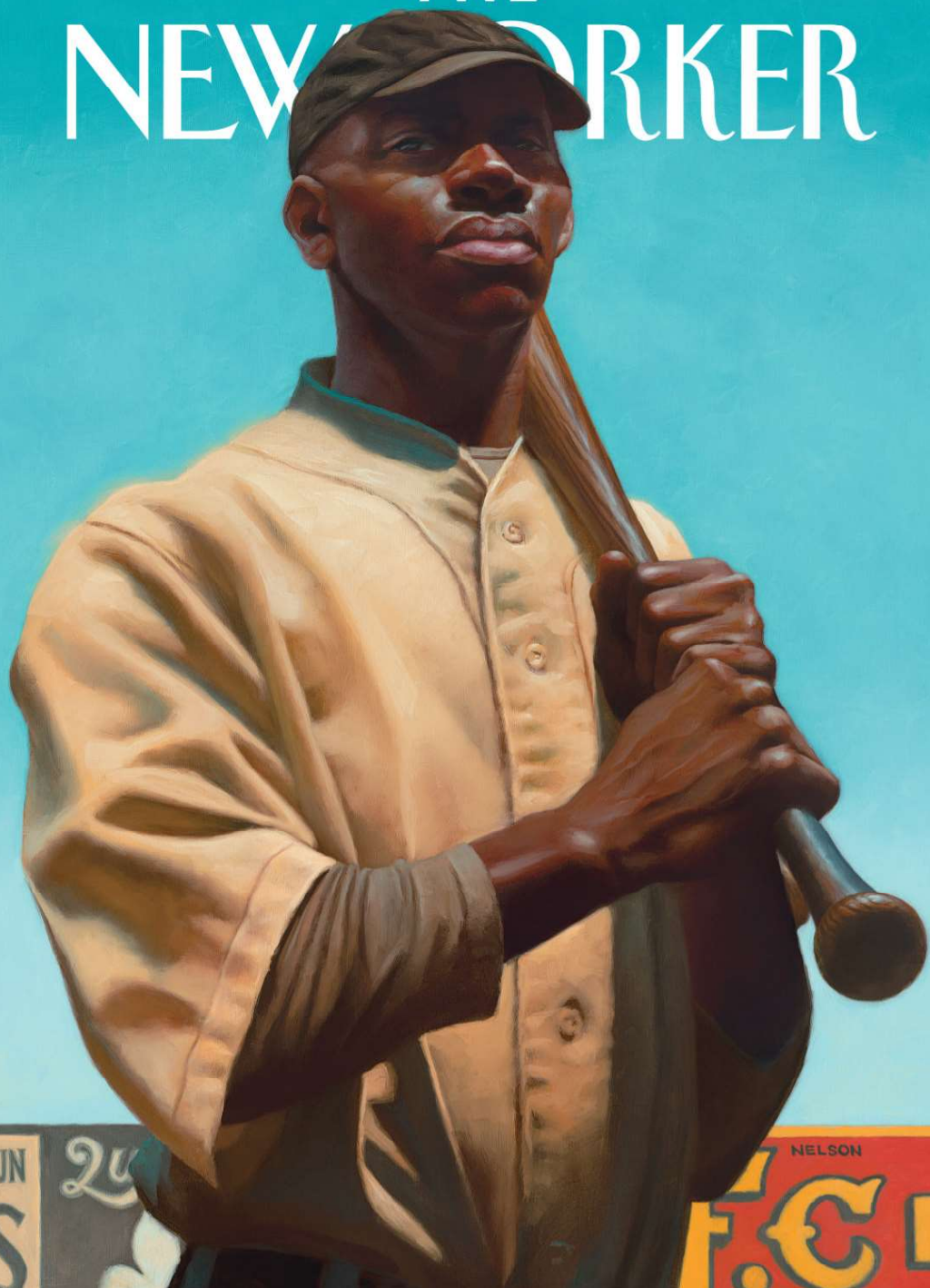
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OCTOBER 19, 2020

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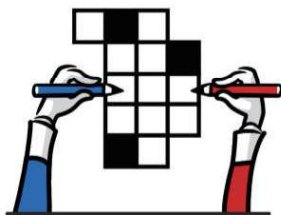
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DRAWINGS Edward Frascino, Elisabeth McNair, Jason Adam Katzenstein, Lars Kenseth, Mike Twoby, Zachary Kanin, Frank Cotham, Roz Chast, Liana Finck, Jeremy Nguyen, William Haefeli, Benjamin Schwartz, Emily Flake, Brendan Loper **SPOTS** Antonio Giovanni Pinna

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Nick Paumgarten (*The Talk of the Town*, p. 17; *The King of New York*, p. 34) has been writing for the magazine since 2000.

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Casey Parks (*The Talk of the Town*, p. 16), a former Spencer Fellow, will publish "Diary of a Misfit" in 2021.

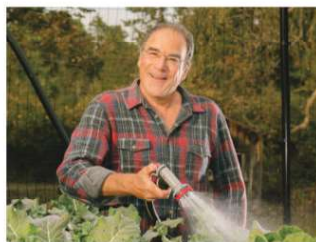
Arthur Sze (*Poem*, p. 42) is the author of, most recently, "Sight Lines," which won the 2019 National Book Award for poetry. His book of new and collected poems, "The Glass Constellation," is forthcoming next year.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM



U.S. JOURNAL

Charles Bethea on how the "QAnon candidate" Marjorie Taylor Greene reached the doorstep of Congress.



THE NEW YORKER INTERVIEW

Rachel Syme talks with Mandy Patinkin about quarantine and his four-decade-long career.

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THE MAIL

PLAYING JOHN BROWN

In John Lahr's Profile of Ethan Hawke, who plays the abolitionist John Brown in "The Good Lord Bird," a new Showtime series, Lahr says that Hawke will be "the first person to put John Brown's full story on film" ("The Shape-Shifter," September 21st). I am a descendant of John Brown, and appreciate the work both of Hawke and of James McBride, who wrote the novel on which the show is based. I welcome their effort to bring John Brown's story to a wider audience. But "The Good Lord Bird" is not a bio-pic; it does not remotely tell the full story of John Brown. Since the film "Santa Fe Trail," released in 1940, which portrayed Brown, played by Raymond Massey, as a maniacal murderer, historians and biographers have done much to debunk characterizations of Brown as insane, many of which were rooted in Jim Crow propaganda and in twentieth-century white supremacy. But the John Brown conceived by James McBride is a fictional character—a distortion, if a friendlier one, of the man. And, while Hawke's project to portray Brown fully is admirable, it bears repeating that any perpetuation of the pervasive tropes about the abolitionist should not be taken lightly, especially in the context of this year's nationwide protests for racial justice.

Marty Brown
Portland, Ore.

SWEETEN THE DEAL

Nicola Twilley describes scientific and corporate efforts to reformulate and synthesize a sugar that can satisfy the human craving for sweetness while lessening the cost to public health ("How Sweet It Is," September 28th). As Twilley admits, a perfectly tasty, perfectly healthy sugar is the gastronomic equivalent of Shangri-La. Conversations about sugar consumption and public health, including those about new sugars, must consider the incentives that drive food and beverage com-

panies. Large manufacturers lobby against public-health interventions that threaten their bottom line; run marketing campaigns for unhealthy foods which disproportionately target communities of color; and pay researchers to flood scientific journals and conferences with business-friendly data. Many companies are racing to redesign sugar not out of an interest in the health of consumers but in pursuit of a healthier business.

Daniel Zaltz
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FROM GLEN TO GLEN

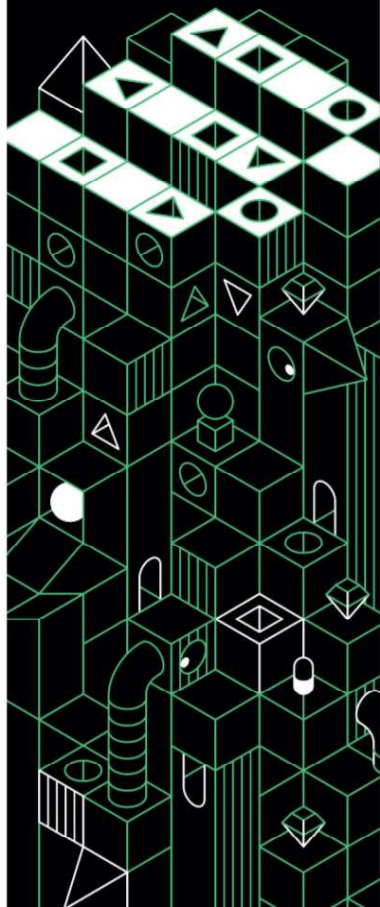
In Lorrie Moore's poignant story "Face Time," the narrator's elderly father, who has contracted the coronavirus and is being treated with hydroxychloroquine, seemingly objects to hearing the song "Danny Boy," because he believes that the Irish "stole" it from the English (Fiction, September 28th). In fact, the song has its origins in both places: the melody is from Ireland, and was popular both in Derry, in Northern Ireland, and on the Beara Peninsula, where it was known as "Maidean i mBéarra" ("A Morning in Beara"). The lyrics, on the other hand, were written by Frederic Weatherly, an English lawyer, in 1910. Although the narrator's father may have harbored this mild conspiracy theory about the Irish before falling ill, Moore's deft association of it with hydroxychloroquine, which can cause hallucinations, marks this story as subtly emblematic of our times.

Ben Howard
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Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

WIRED GAMES

COMING OCTOBER

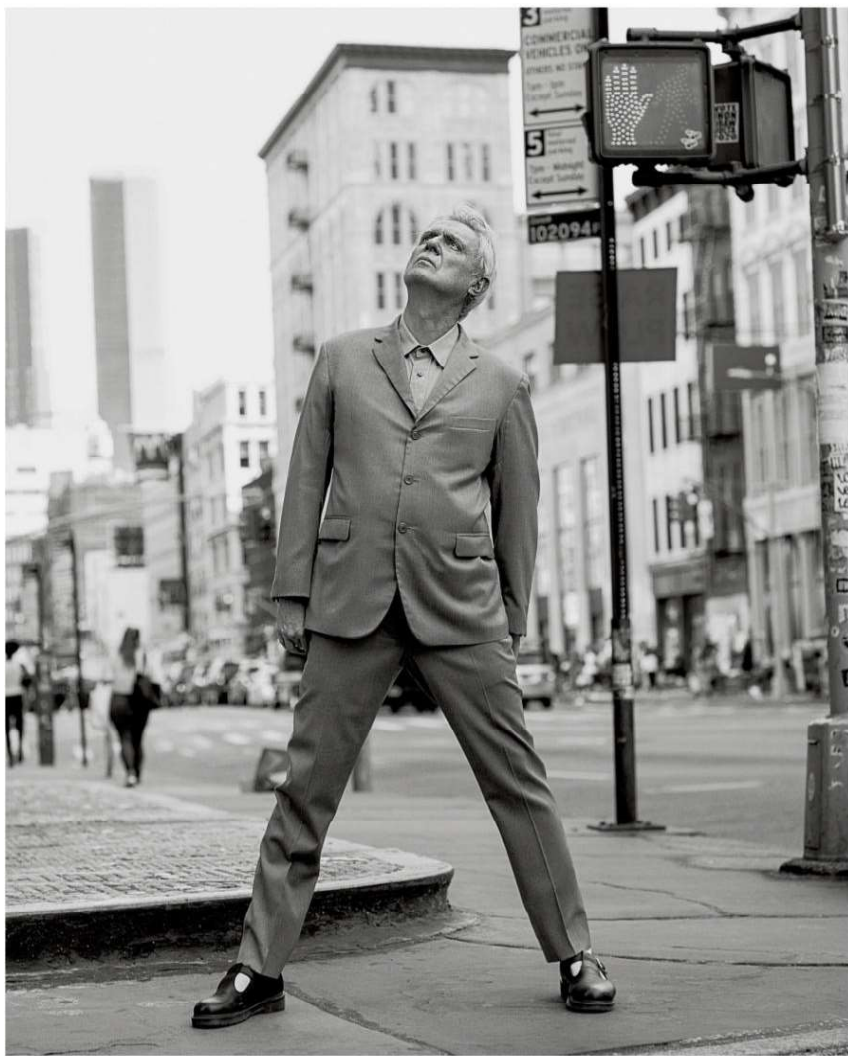


In an effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus, many New York City venues are closed. Here's a selection of culture to be found around town, as well as online and streaming.

OCTOBER 14 - 20, 2020



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



At the start of David Byrne's peculiar, exuberant **"American Utopia,"** which played on Broadway last season, the former Talking Heads front man contemplates a model of a human brain. Part concert, part vision quest, the show is also a chance to contemplate Byrne's own brain—a unique specimen—as he expounds on philosophy, belts out many of his hits, and marches through the aisles with a roving twelve-piece band, all in matching silver suits and bare feet. A filmed version, directed by Spike Lee, comes to HBO on Oct. 17.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ETHAN JAMES GREEN

MUSIC

Cut Worms: “Nobody Lives Here Anymore”

ROCK On Cut Worms’s second album, “Nobody Lives Here Anymore,” Max Clarke, the project’s creator, flits through an avalanche of pop sources, drawing most vigorously from the less frenetic side of the sixties. Hints of British and Southern lilt sneak into the Midwestern-bred and Brooklyn-based artist’s singing—regional affiliations mean little when held against the unshakable bond between a musician and his record collection. Nostalgia, in its many forms, courses through the double LP, which the songwriter claims grapples with a “homesickness for childhood,” but the music’s discontent is largely impressionistic. More explicit are the crisp illustrations that Clarke made to accompany each of the album’s songs: a headless cowboy shakes hands with a television; a gunman approaches a store; a monstrous cruise ship dominates open waters, festooned with an American flag.—*Jay Ruttenberg*

Good Sad Happy Bad: “Shades”

INDIE POP The London art-rock band Micachu and the Shapes, led by the singer-songwriter Mica Levi, was marked by precise lyrics and an ear for gloriously askew harmonics. The same group reconvenes in Good Sad Happy Bad, accompanied by the woodwind player CJ Calderwood, with Raisa Khan out front and Levi in a supporting role—she sings lead on only two tracks on “Shades,” the new project’s debut. Khan’s songs are fiendishly catchy and edgily playful, and the lyrics are plainspoken and pin-sharp, nowhere more than on “Honey”: “Why is it always a competition / Why do you make me the opposition / When I don’t do what you want me to do?”—*Michaelangelo Matos*

Ermonela Jaho: “Anima Rara”

OPERA In 1904, the Italian soprano Rosina Storchio originated the title role of Puccini’s vocally demanding tragedy “Madama Butterfly,” but that one history-defining credit paints an incomplete picture of a singer who was admired for the sensitivity, lyricism, and fragility of her portrayals. With “Anima Rara,” the Albanian soprano Ermonela Jaho fills in the blanks: although she bookends her album with two “Butterfly” arias, the focus is on selections from other operas in Storchio’s repertoire, including Massenet’s “Manon,” Leoncavallo’s “La Bohème,” Mascagni’s “Lodoletta,” and Verdi’s “La Traviata.” Jaho’s gentle timbre, nuanced inflections, and, above all, tonal clarity are enchanting, revealing a compelling portrait of Storchio’s art—and her own.—*Oussama Zahr*

Kiki & Herb: “Seeking Asylum!”

CABARET Filmed at Joe’s Pub in 2016, “Seeking Asylum!,” the latest reunion of Justin Vivian Bond and Kenny Mellman’s cabaret alias, Kiki & Herb, was recently uploaded to YouTube and is available until Nov. 5. It’s the optimal way to experience Kiki’s wayward storytelling (and fabulously cheap dresses). Herb’s agile piano commentary, and the way they both turn small-bar crooning, an indie-leaning rock songbook, and show biz itself inside out. Even when it’s

quiet, the music has a bracing punk throttle, including revelatory transformations of classics by Prince, Radiohead, Hole, and Fugazi.—*M.M.*

Vision Festival Healing Soul

JAZZ The Vision Festival, an intimate annual celebration of free improvisation, is pushing forward despite the pandemic. Though not an official iteration of the festival, this interim event—which is available online following a live-streamed show with limited in-person attendance—offers performances by such mainstays as Wadada Leo Smith, Oliver Lake, Amina Claudine Myers, David Murray, and Andrew Cyrille. Patricia Nicholson, the unswerving driving wheel behind the event, fronts the Healing Force ensemble; newer faces include Gerald Cleaver (with the Black Host quintet), Fay Victor, and the poet LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs. This year’s performances are presented from La Plaza at the Clemente, in New York City, and from Firehouse 12, in New Haven.—*Steve Futterman (artsforart.org/healingsoul)*

“We Are the Change”

CLASSICAL The Lied Society, a Minneapolis organization devoted to art song and emerg-

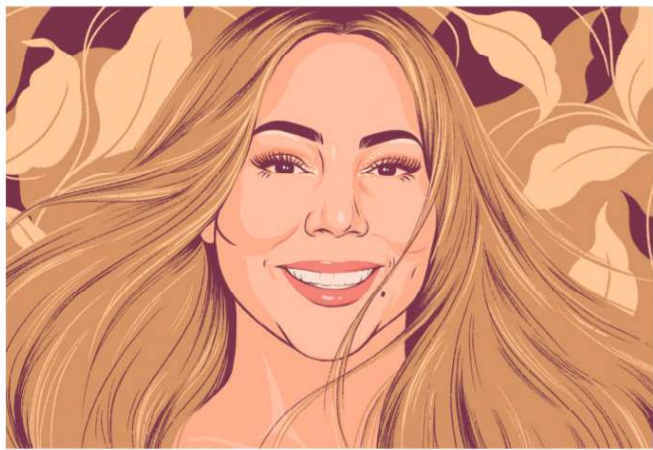
ing voices, presents the concert “We Are the Change,” streaming live audio from the Ordway Center, in St. Paul, on the society’s Web site. The show brings together five accomplished Black artists—the soprano Marsha Thompson, the mezzo-soprano Raehann Bryce-Davis, the tenor J. Warren Mitchell, the baritone Thomas Cannon, and the pianist Byron Burford-Phearse—for a mix of opera arias and song. Featured prominently is the world premiere of “We Call the Roll,” by Anthony Davis, the winner of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for music, with text by his cousin, the distinguished writer and scholar Thulani Davis.—*Steve Smith (Oct. 18 at 5; liedociety.org.)*

ART

“Judd”

Donald Judd was the last great revolutionary of modern art. The gorgeous boxy objects—he refused to call them sculptures—that the American artist constructed between the early nineteen-sixties and his death, from cancer, in 1994, irreversibly

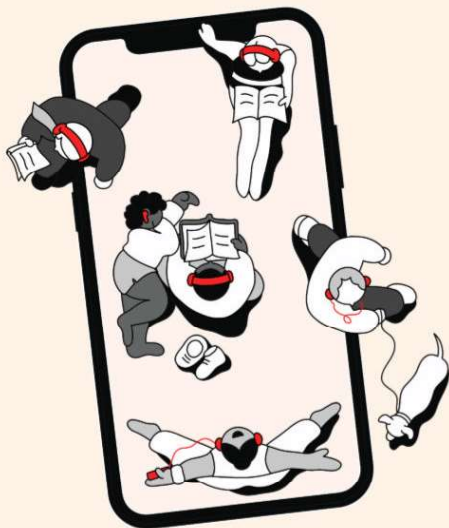
POP RETROSPECTIVE



“The Rarities” returns listeners to the halcyon days of **Mariah Carey’s** high belt, when no note was too lofty and no run too elaborate. Taken together with her new memoir, “The Meaning of Mariah Carey,” this two-disk compilation of B-sides, previously unreleased tracks, and a full concert from 1996 reveals a different pop star, one who surrounded herself with fantasies, butterflies, glitter, and perpetual Christmas in order to escape a difficult and sometimes violent childhood. In that context, her ebullient singing sounds equal parts joyful and vehement, a force of nature and of will. Carey spent the nineties churning out hits in the pop-music dream factory; as her vocal resources became a bit more modest, she shifted toward sensual, hip-hop-inflected R. & B. for a successful mid-two-thousands comeback. Still, it’s her early work—and that powerful, elastic, honeyed voice—that rings indelibly.—*Oussama Zahr*

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OF OAT-
GURT
CUPS
OVER
THERE?**

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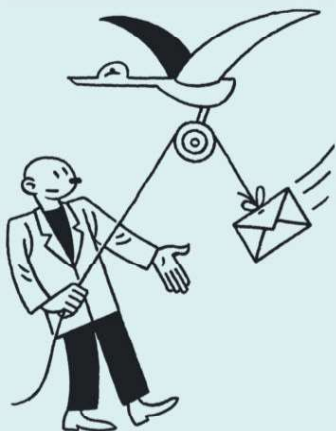
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