

EVENTS

FOR CHILDREN

CHOCOLATE CHIPS, NO CRUMBS

The Chocolate Chip Chamber Music series, a new arrival for Park Slope preschoolers, debuts a classical program this Saturday at the Old First Reformed Church. (See box.) 5/20 at 10 and 11:30 a.m.; Old First Reformed Church, 126 Seventh Ave., nr. Carroll St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-638-8300); \$5.

ACTION FROM THE ANDES

This weekend at the National Museum of the American Indian, kids will make beaded jewelry, decorate clay pots with petroglyphs, and learn dances from the Andes. Don't forget to wander the galleries for an in-depth look at indigenous tribes from around the world. 5/20 and 5/21 from noon to 5 p.m.; National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green, nr. Battery Park (212-514-3700 or americanindian.si.edu); free.

MAMMALIAN MUSIC

What musician David Weinstein started as a musical accompaniment to classroom lessons in 1997 has gone on to become a kiddie-concert program. Now, Music for Aardvarks and Other Mammals, known as MFA, plays an open-to-the-public show at the John Jay High School Auditorium. Look for crowd favorites. We love the toddler mosh pit. 5/21 at 3 p.m.; John Jay High School Auditorium, 237 Seventh Ave., nr. 4th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-243-0440 or cobblehillplaygroup.com); \$15, free for infants.

TUGGING AT HEARTSTRINGS

If the maritime world floats your child's boat, then take the little one to Battery Park City for a talk about "Tugboats of New York." Historian George Matteson will offer details about the watery workhorses that help the big ocean liners and garbage barges navigate smoothly into their ports and conduct rescue ops. 5/20 at 2 p.m.; Battery Park City, Robert F. Wagner, Jr. Park, access through Battery Pl. (212-267-9700 or bpcparks.org); free.

SPACE: 2006

Astronomer Mark Freilich wants city kids to know what's

going on beyond planet Earth. This Saturday, he starts out at Alley Pond Environmental Center teaching a basic astronomy lesson, then takes attendees outdoors to search the sky via professional telescope. 5/20 from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.; Alley Pond Environmental Center, 228-06 Northern Blvd., Douglaston (718-229-4000 or alleypond.com); \$12 grown-ups, \$7 kids.

SHUFFLE OFF TO BROADWAY

Tap dance has hit a fever pitch in the city. Now, the Tap City Youth Ensemble performs a couple of free shows at Capezio's flagship location in the theater district, where the entire front of the store will be cleared out for the hoofers. Bring your child's tap shoes and let him jam with the dancers. 5/21 and 6/18 from 5 to 6 p.m.; Capezio, 1650 Broadway, nr. 51st St. (212-245-2130 or atdf.org); free.

MOMS WHO ROCK (AND DADS, TOO)

Mamapalooza 2006 at Riverside Park South is gonna rock out with a musical lineup for kids and grown-ups. Meander along the waterside for a little clown entertainment, face-painting, arts and crafts, yoga demos, belly dancing, knitting workshops, and more. 5/21 from noon to 5 p.m.; Riverside Park South, Pier 1 at 70th St., enter at W. 72nd St. (mamapalooza.com); free.

PEACE OUT

Dealing with bullies is never easy, but the misfit characters from *In Tune With the Universe* figure out, with the help of some peace-loving hippies from the sixties, that there's a way to rise above the mocking without resorting to might-makes-right tactics. From the Fildwith Ensemble at Theatre Three. For kids 6 and older. 5/17, 5/18, 5/19 at 7 p.m., 5/20 at 2 and 7 p.m., 5/21 at 2 p.m.; Theatre Three, 311 W. 43rd St., nr. Eighth Ave. (212-279-4200 or ticket-central.com); \$18.

AN AFRICAN JOURNEY

In *Little Tales*, the Manhattan Children's Theatre tells stories about well-known African characters: Anansi, the sneaky spider; Dukufriokko, the friendly turtle; and Zomo, the wise rabbit. Using puppets, actors, and audience participation, MCT encourages preschoolers to discover live theater in a non-shushing environment. Through 5/24, Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Manhattan Children's Theatre, 52 White St., nr. Broadway (212-226-4085 or mctny.org); \$10.

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PLAYDATE

A Young Person's Guide to the Chamber Orchestra Park Slope church fills with kid-friendly sound.

What began as a Park Slope pastor's idea to bring free music to his services has evolved into a classical-music program for kids of all denominations. Bringing a bit of competition to the century-old Brooklyn Queens Conservatory of Music down the block, the Chocolate Chip Chamber Music Series debuts this Saturday with a selection of eight pieces, each less than two minutes long to accommodate the attention spans of toddlers and preschoolers. It all started last fall, when Pastor Daniel Meeter pulled together what he called the Joyful Noise Committee at the Old First Reformed Church, a Seventh Avenue landmark. "The church didn't have the funding to maintain a choir director this year, so he turned to his members who are professional musicians and asked them to play during services," explains Helen Richman, church parishioner, member of the Femmes Four Flute Quartet, and new mom. "Then it dawned on me that within this committee, we had the experience and capability to put something together for children as well." The 35-minute program includes Baker Bob as the master of ceremonies, who introduces each piece with storytelling and puppetry. To celebrate the first show, local bakeries are donating dozens of chocolate-chip cookies for the crowd. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* will have the audience buzzing around the theater, while the finale, a complex arrangement of "I've Been Working on the Railroad," involves a toddler choo-choo. "There will be some expectation to try to listen," says Richman. "But it won't be the kind of thing where they'll be admonished." (See "Events.")

S.A.