



A Day in Chicago: A Singer's Guide to a Musical Metropolis

by Chantal Panozzo

If you're joining Classical Singer next month in Chicago for our annual convention (see ad p. 28), or visiting the city for another reason, here's your guide to a city tour every singer will love.

Chicago. It's the name of a theater. It's the name of a musical. Not to mention the title of many songs—including one you may have heard Frank Sinatra sing. So it's no wonder the "Second City" has a first-class music scene. Chicago has been sung about for decades by everyone from The Doobie Brothers to The Blues Brothers. It's home to one of the world's best orchestras and one of the leading opera houses. And it gave the musical world noted opera singer Emma Abbott, crooners Nat "King" Cole and Mel Tormé, jazz musicians Gene Krupa and Benny Goodman, and venerable pop/rock bands Chicago and Styx . . . among many others. So the possibilities for exploring its musical offerings are endless. Just make sure to take a moment to stand outside and listen—in this city, even the wind whistles.

9:30 a.m. Warm-Up

As a prelude to your Chicago musical adventure, have breakfast at the **Artist's Café** (ground floor of *The Fine Arts Building*, 412 S. Michigan Avenue, 312-939-7855, www.artists-cafe.com). Opened in 1961, the café has hosted everyone from casts of *Phantom of the Opera* to performers like John Belushi. Not only might you rub elbows with artists from around the world here, but you can also choose from an appropriately international menu. Try the lingonberry-topped Swedish pancakes or "Napoleon's French Toast Croissant," laced in French vanilla batter, stuffed

with whipped cream, and sprinkled with almonds, honey, cinnamon, and powdered sugar.

11:00 a.m. Art of Shopping

As you leave the café, be sure to admire the building it's nestled in. The **Fine Arts Building** was converted in 1898 from a wagon carriage showroom into studios and theaters for artists. You may hear the sounds of singers echoing through the building as you take the rickety elevator (still run by an elevator operator) to the 9th floor to visit **Performers Music** (410 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 904, 312-987-1196, www.performersmusicchicago.com), one of Chicago's last remaining classical sheet music stores. If it feels like it's been there since 1981, that's because it has. But the lack of modernization is part of its charm, and the supply of vocal music, books, and magazines more than makes up for it. After you browse, be sure to look up as you exit—Frank Lloyd Wright had a studio right above you on the 10th floor.

11:45 a.m. Symphonic Stop

Walk two blocks north on Michigan Avenue and you'll find yourself at the home of one of the most acclaimed orchestras in the world—the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In fact, *Gramophone Magazine* recently named CSO the number one ranked orchestra in the United States. At the **Symphony Center** (220 S. Michigan Avenue, 312-294-3000, www.cso.org) you

can check concert/event schedules and buy performance tickets. While you're there, don't miss the **Symphony Store** for a musical souvenir. Browse through the symphony's latest recordings (including the acclaimed Shostakovich Symphony No. 4), pick up a few musical cookie cutters, or try on the latest in trendy clothing, like a George Crumb *Agnus Dei* t-shirt.

12:15 p.m. Lunchtime Concert

Continue walking north up Michigan Avenue until you cross Washington Street, where you'll find yourself at the **Chicago Cultural Center** (78 E. Washington, 312-744-6630; www.chicagoculturalcenter.org). If it's a weekday, you can enjoy a free lunchtime concert, which normally begins at 12:15 p.m. These midday concerts feature up-and-coming musicians. Alumni who have sung here include soprano Elizabeth Futral, who went from here to opera houses around the world.

Concert or not, the center, formerly Chicago's main library, is worth a look for its stained glass Tiffany dome, the largest of its kind in the world. Made of colored glass, stone, and mother-of-pearl, it's valued at \$35 million. Before you leave, you may want to check the desk by the entrance to see if there's a building tour at 1:15 p.m. or perhaps a concert that evening.

1:30 p.m. Late Lunch

Head west on Washington Street to Chicago's famous State Street and visit

Macy's (formerly **Marshall Field and Co.**) department store (111 N. State Street, 312-781-1000, www.visitmacyschicago.com). In 1907, when Marshall Field's opened its doors, it was considered the largest store in the world. Take the escalator to the seventh floor (if you don't get distracted by all the possibilities for your next recital outfit first) and you'll be rewarded with three good places for lunch.

One option is the casual **FRANGO Café** for soups, sandwiches, and the famous Frango Mint Ice Cream pie. For a more leisurely lunch, the elegant 1907 **Walnut Room**, complete with a 17-foot marble fountain, is the perfect spot for a sit-down meal of butternut squash ravioli or chicken pot pie. For a quick bite, try **Seven on State**, an upscale food court with options ranging from goat cheese salads to Japanese noodle soups, all which come with great views over the city.

Before you walk back out Macy's doors onto State Street, make sure to look up and admire the Tiffany mosaic dome, resplendent with more than 1.6 million pieces of iridescent glass.

3:00 p.m. Theater Scouting

Exit Macy's at State and Randolph Streets and take in the brightly lit marquees of the **Oriental Theater** (24 W. Randolph, 312-902-1400, www.oriental-theater.com), where Judy Garland once performed, and the Beaux-Arts style **Chicago Theater** (175 N. State Street, 312-462-6300, www.thechicagotheatre.com), the oldest theater in the city (built in 1921). If you're interested in tickets to a musical or stage performance, stop by the **Hot Tix** booth (72 E. Randolph, 312-751-1876, www.hottix.org) for half-price, same-day tickets to a Loop theater show. Orders are not taken over the phone and must be purchased online or in person.

3:30 p.m. Artistic Inspiration

After walking east down Randolph Street, cross Michigan Avenue and walk through **Millennium Park**, stopping to admire the outdoor **Music Pavilion** built by Frank Gehry where the Grant Park

Symphony makes its home in the summer. Be sure to let your gaze take in the vast Chicago skyline, and don't miss getting a photo of your reflection in the **Cloud Gate** sculpture (affectionately nicknamed "**The Bean**").

Wend your way to the park's next-door neighbor, the **Art Institute of Chicago** (111 S. Michigan Avenue, 312-443-3600, www.artic.edu). Don't let the famous lions guarding the entrance scare you as you climb the steps to one of the world's greatest collections of creativity to begin your tour of over 5,000 years of human artistry. As a musician, you'll be sure to appreciate Renoir's "Woman at the Piano" (Gallery 201) as well as other duets between music and art, such as Wendell Castle's "Music Stand" in Galleries 158-159 and Jan Steen's "The Family Concert" in Gallery 213.

5:30 p.m. Pure Indulgence

Enjoy a typical Chicago-style deep-dish pizza at **Giordano's** (310 W. Randolph, 312-201-1441, www.giordanos.com). Choose from pizzas with time-tested combinations like sausage-mushroom-green pepper-onions, or the classic spinach, or create your own. If you still have room after indulging in this Chicago tradition, try topping your pie off with a little tiramisu or a cannoli.

As an alternative to pizza, try **Rhapsody** (65 E. Adams, 312-786-9911, www.rhapsodychicago.com), a contemporary restaurant right behind the Symphony Center that offers an upscale American menu with a global twist. Choose from such savory entrées as Amish Chicken made with pan-roasted cranberry and onion bread pudding, or the Beef Cheek Risotto served with asparagus and roasted corn. Be advised, though, to arrive before 6:30 p.m. if you don't have reservations, as the Symphony crowd tends to arrive about that time en masse.

7:30 p.m. Showtime

Depending on your mood, attend a concert at one of Chicago's many performance venues. If you didn't find

a show earlier at the Hot Tix booth, the Symphony Center, or the Chicago Cultural Center, try the **Civic Opera House** (20 N. Wacker Dr., 312-419-0033, www.civicoperahouse.com). Although the Lyric Opera of Chicago is in season only from September-March, you might catch a special event. Other possible musical options include **Millennium Park** (201 E. Randolph St., 312-742-1168, www.millenniumpark.org/parkevents) and **Chamber Opera Chicago** (1920 N. Lincoln Ave, 312-951-7944, www.chamberoperachicago.org), which runs programs like *Hansel and Gretel* through June.

10:00 p.m. Surprise Songs

For the night's final encore, grab a cab to **Underground Wonder Bar** (10 E. Walton, 312-266-7761, www.undergroundwonderbar.com) on Chicago's Near North Side. Owned by jazz musician Lonie Walker, the bar is known for hosting live music 365 days a year. Depending on the day, you'll be treated to jazz, blues, reggae, folk, or an open mic night. But whether you're tapping your feet to jazz vocalists like Kimberly Gordon, humming along with violinist/singer Heather Horton, or performing on stage yourself, you'll be in a singer-friendly, smoke-free environment thanks to the smoking laws in Illinois. The intimate atmosphere and musician clientele make the place feel like a private party.

Chantal Panozzo was trained as a singer and pianist in the Chicago area before she combined her love of music with her love of writing. An award-winning writer, Panozzo specializes in music, expat issues, and travel writing. Her stories have appeared everywhere from The Christian Science Monitor to Swiss News the National English Journal of Switzerland. This spring she is serving as a National Geographic Glimpse Correspondent, where she reports on Switzerland for glimpse.org. Panozzo is also a recent recipient of the Rosalie Fleming Memorial Humor Prize for her satire on the airline industry. Discover more about her at www.chantalpanozzo.com.

