

PICK FIVE (PLUS)

Your weekly guide to Houston: Drink beer to save Memorial Park's trees, Messiah for kids & Dickens on The Strand



By [Joel Luks](#)

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Nothing says holiday spirit more than a visit to Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens during its Holiday Candlelight Tours. *Bruce Bennett Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts Houston*



What the Dickens? This festival in Galveston has been going on for 38 years. *Photo by David Canright, Galveston Historical Foundatio*

A red poster for a 'Beer for Bark' event. At the top left is a white outline of a leaf. To its right is a white outline of a beer mug. The main title 'BEER FOR BARK' is written in large, white, hand-drawn letters, with 'SUPPORTING TREES FOR HOUSTON' written below it in smaller, similar letters. A white string is tied in a knot across the middle of the poster. Below the knot, the event details are listed in white text: 'THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1st', '6:00pm-8:00pm', '@Whole Foods Market Montrose', and '\$25.00 per ticket'. Below this is the phrase 'Great Beer, Tasty Food, and Groovy Music!'. A quote follows: '"Help Trees For Houston save trees in Memorial Park and throughout the Houston region!"'. At the bottom left is the Whole Foods Market logo. To its right is the 'Trees for Houston' logo, which features a green tree silhouette. To the right of that logo is the text '100% OF THE PROCEEDS WILL BE DONATED TO HELP SUPPORT TREES FOR HOUSTON'.

Who knew drinking beer could help Memorial Park's green canopy? At this event, guests will support Trees for Houston's efforts in keeping the city



Houston Ballet artist Emily Bowen in *The Vertiginous Thrill of Exactitude*, choreographed by William Forsythe *Photo by Amitava Sarkar*



New and shiny isn't always better. In *The Heights*, it's about keeping it in style with the original spirit of the neighborhood.

It's hard to believe it finally happened. After the fiasco and impromptu evacuation of [Angelika Film Center](#) from Bayou Place, Robert Redford's Sundance Cinemas is now open.

We'd heard all about its luxury amenities — like signature cocktails, table-ettes in between seats, reserved seating and gourmet foods — and now that dream is a "reel-ality."

A lively melange of Houstonians thronged the facilities — among them Lynn Wyatt, Lorraine and Ed Wulfe, Houston Arts Alliance's Jonathon Glus, Dee Dee Dochen, MFAH's film curator Marian Luntz and Sundance president and CEO Paul S. Richardson — for the preview parties last week, delighting in libations, wine, popcorn with real butter and GoodPop frozen pops while exploring the modernist yet eco-happy space.

Thanksgiving is now over. That means many art groups in town have begun their holiday shows. That includes Houston Ballet's [Nutcracker](#), Alley Theatre's *Santaland Diaries* and *A Christmas Carol - A Ghost Story of Christmas*, Stages Repertory Theatre's *Winter Wonderettes*, The Music Box Theater's *Fruitcakes!* (a very special holiday special), A. D. Players' *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* and Suchu Dance' [SHCHELKUNCHIK Deconstructed Nutcracker](#).

Much to do, and so little time. Before you know it, December will be history. That means 2012 is just around the corner.

How do you get the best out of December? Week by week, I'll try to break it down. Here's this week's event roundup.

Holiday Time at Bayou Bend: Candlelight Evenings

As a Jew that loves everything red, green and Yuletide, my holiday season isn't complete without a visit to Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens for a stroll through the themed rooms. Affixed with festive lights, jolly period décor inside and out and plenty of hot cider and you have the makings of a delightful evening that's also educational. Docents will be stationed through the home to teach about decorative arts and the ornaments on display.

The Candlelight Evenings happen on [Thursdays and Fridays](#) and run for three weeks.

Beer for Bark benefiting Trees for Houston at Whole Foods Market Montrose

First the drought claimed [millions of trees](#) all around Houston. Now that chilly wintry weather is here — at least Houston's version of the season — lets just hope that lower temperatures don't kill more of our city's foliage.

What can you do about it? Drink beer.

At Beer for Bark at [Whole Foods Market Montrose](#) set for 6 p.m. Thursday, local crafty suds will be the roots of a fundraising campaign that supports Trees for Houston's quest to save the canopy of Memorial Park. Append music and a selection of tasty munchables and you have the recipe for a lovely green social.

2011 Houston Heights Association Holiday Home Tour "Deck the Heights"

For a city that seems to have a fondness for the new — at least when it comes to real estate — neighborhoods like The Heights constantly remind residents and passersby that there's charm and éclat in the styles of yesteryear, whether that means Victorian, Craftsman or Colonial Revival, amidst other adorable architecture with divine wrap around porches and covered verandas.

Six homeowners welcome holiday and design curious guests into their homes, which have been decorated to lift holiday spirits. On deck are a cute 1920s two-bedroom cottage, a 1904 Queen Anne-style residence on the National Register of Historic Places that just underwent a second renovation project, and a 2008 custom home built in Craftsman style.

If houses could hug you, they would look exactly like these.

Tickets for the [Friday](#) (6 to 9 p.m.) and [Saturday](#) (3 to

9 p.m.) [tour are \\$20](#) and proceeds help maintain Marmion Park, Donovan Park and the Heights Boulevard esplanade park.

Messiah for Kids presented by Houston Chamber Choir and the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra

It's unfathomable to think that society has enjoyed 270 years of Handel's *Messiah*, a tradition indispensable during the holiday season. More so, it has taken circa three centuries for someone to realize the piece is just not at all kid friendly.

That's where River Oaks Chamber Orchestra's [Alecia Lawyer](#) comes in to commission a composer like Karim Al-Zand — on faculty at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music — to craft a version (*Messiah for Kids!*) that sheds light on the connection between words and music. To do so, the score calls for an actor to portray Handel. That will be Rutherford Cravens, call him Ruddy for short.

You have seen Cravens at the Alley and as an essential part of the yearly Shakespeare Festival at Miller Outdoor Theater. I can't imagine anyone more suited for the part. Expect to sing, participate and learn a thing or two. [Saturday at 11 a.m.](#)

Dickens on The Strand Festival

A tradition 38 years in the making, the [Dickens on The Strand Festival](#) in Galveston morphs The Strand into 19th century Victorian London on Saturday (10 a.m. to 9 p.m.) and Sunday (10 a.m. to 6 p.m.) with parades, five stages of music and entertainment, strolling carolers, promenading musicians, bagpipers and jugglers among many more activities suitable for adults and children alike.

Victorian costumes may seem formal and restrictive, but nothing about this fete is. That includes in-style bed races during which contestants donning sleeping attire push Victorian-dressed beds on wheels, a Whimsical Whisker Revue facial hair contest and the Piccadilly Circus, a children's pavilion with elephant and camel rides.

Couldn't you use a little Dickens in your life?

Arts smarty pants and beer lovin' lovable gal Nancy Wozny's pick: Houston Ballet's "Jubilee of Dance"

Nancy says: "Houston Ballet's '[Jubilee of Dance](#)' on [Friday](#) is a bittersweet occasion this year as it includes as special tribute to departing executive director [Cecil C. Conner, Jr.](#) who presided over an incredible period of growth for the organization. He will be missed.

"Stanton Welch has choreographed a goodbye ballet, *The Gentleman*, especially for him. There's also some looking forward in the program with Melissa Hough's *C-Sharp Minor* included, which features costumes by corps member and Dance Magazine's '25 to watch' girl [Allison Miller](#). 'The Jubilee' is also a great way to see what's coming up. I always appreciate that Welch manages to show off the entire company."

Houston explorer and CultureMap's adorably awesome Whitney Radley's pick: Houston Ballet's *The Nutcracker*

Whitney says: "Some girlfriends are coming to visit me this weekend, and there's perhaps no better way to introduce them to Houston than the theater district at night. On Saturday, we'll be dressing up to enjoy a fancy dinner downtown and a holiday classic — Houston Ballet's [The Nutcracker](#)."

Photo editor, fashionista and design junkie Barbara Kuntz's pick: First Saturday Arts Market

Barbara says: "As I write, I am empty-handed of holiday gifts . . . and I'm starting to panic a bit. Thank goodness for that reliable First Saturday Arts Market in the Heights, where I always find a perfect-fit present for a cousin, my mother, an aunt and, of course, for me, whether it's original artwork, jewelry or other handmade goodies."

"And not being a mall shopper, I love the festive atmosphere along 19th Street. [First Saturday Arts Market](#) to the rescue!"

Source: <http://houston.culturemap.com/news/city-life/12-01-11-your-weekly-guide-to-houston-drink-beer-to-save-houston-trees-messaih-for-kids-and-dickens-on-the-strand/>