

There are some things most people take for granted as being just not right.

You don't wear sweat pants to a nice restaurant.

You don't invite your friends over for dinner and ask them to clean your house first.

You don't sell season tickets for a top-flight classical ballet to subscribers and then give them taped music.

It may be easier, more comfy, and sure it's more time-effective and cheaper.

But easier and cheaper isn't the proper goal of an arts organization.

It would be terrific if the powers-that-be of the Pittsburgh Ballet would reconsider. Because the true power of that organization is the one that comes from the humans on stage and below it, and behind the stage too, and even from the audience, all working together to interpret and deliver and uncover a unified artistic performance that transmits a unique rendition of one small corner of the rich, intense, and indefinable experience of human life.

This is real art, being performed in real time right in front of your eyes and ears. It's hard to believe, maybe, in this world of TV and movies. But it's true, the dancers have actually memorized all their moves. They are watching each other and deciding RIGHT NOW how best to time very intricate gestures and moves. Meanwhile, the musicians are reading dots on a page really fast and quickly deciding how to shape their fingers, lips, breath; they are listening to their colleagues, and watching the conductor who is also watching the dancers who are listening to the music RIGHT NOW and responding to what they are hearing in this particular instant. The dancers and the musicians and the conductor are having a conversation.

Answering machines and e-mail are great time-savers, but eventually your friends expect to have a real conversation with you. And you want that too. It's just more satisfying, more human.

So please, Pittsburgh, don't cheapen your Ballet by serving canned music. Don't deprive your audiences of a real conversation.

You don't send an MP3 of your voice to a friend's wedding, with regrets that you couldn't be there yourself. It just isn't right.

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